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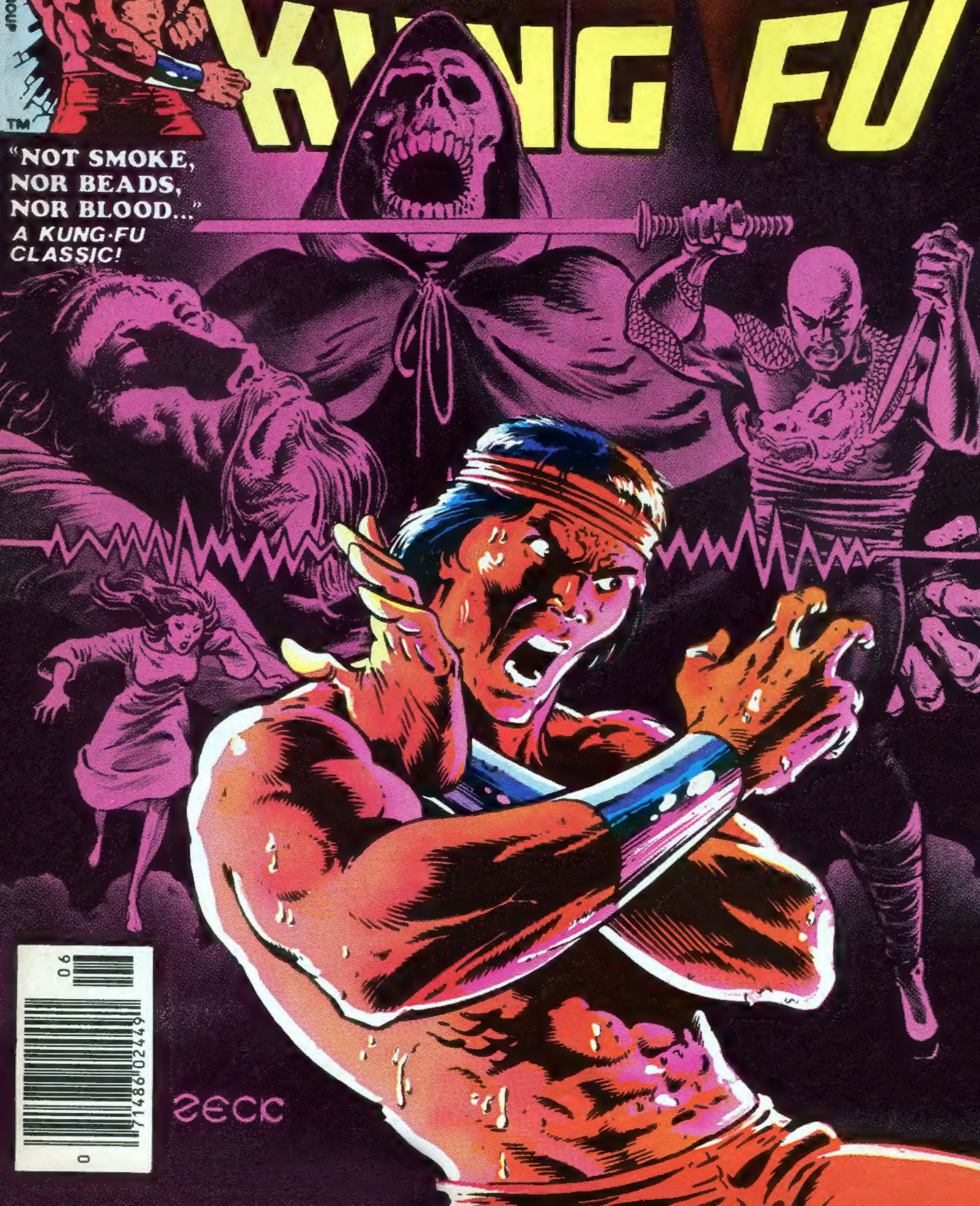


THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI.

MASTER OF KUNG FU

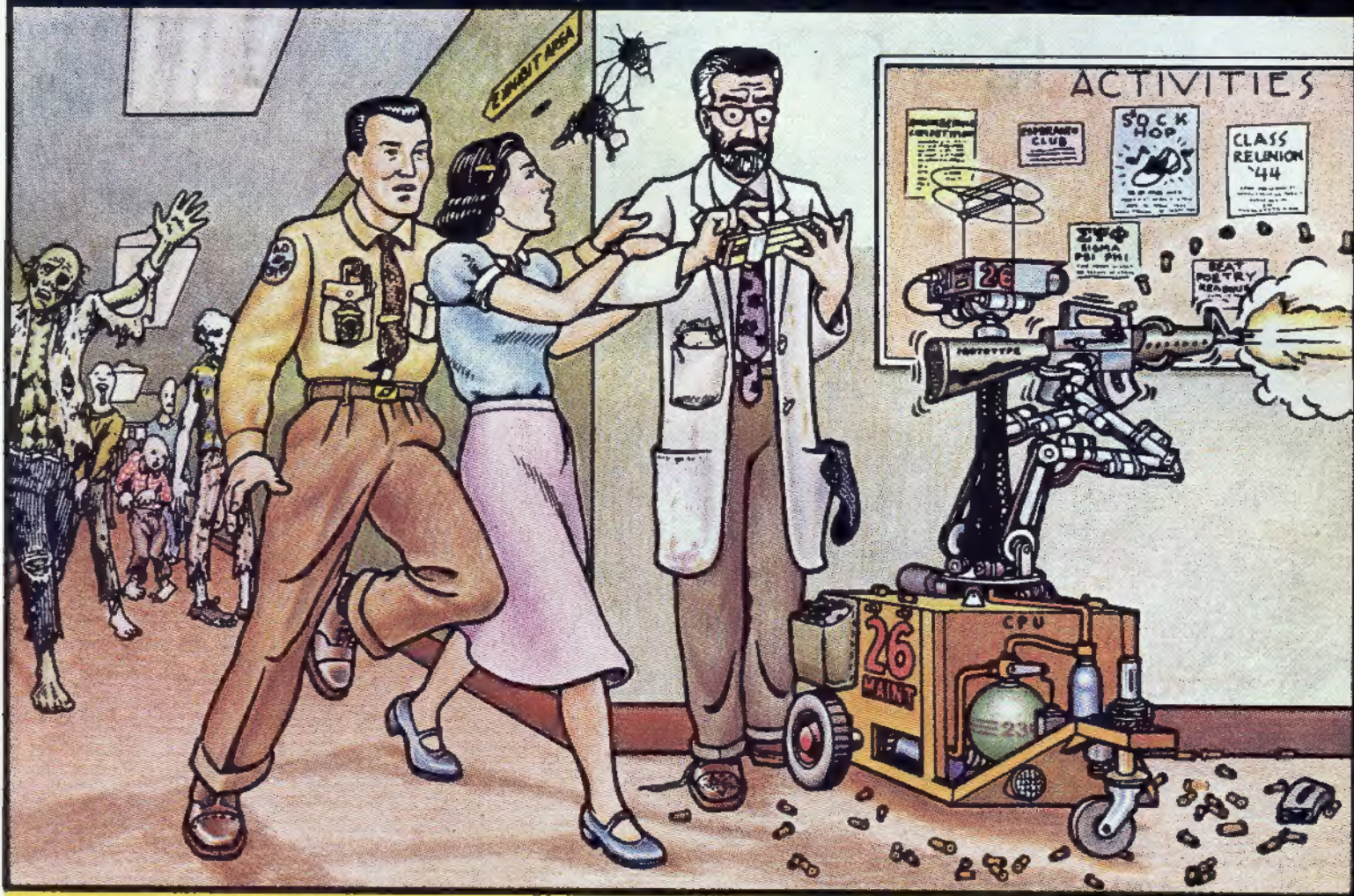


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NOR BEADS,
NOR BLOOD..."
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Stan Lee
PRESENTS:

MASTER OF KUNG FU!

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

NOT SMOKE, NOR BEADS, NOR BLOOD!

"THE HOSPITAL IN LONDON..."

GET WELL
QUICKLY, LEIKO,
HEAR?

JOURNEY SAFELY
-- WE SHALL SEE
YOU AGAIN IN
SEVERAL WEEKS.

I'LL DO MY BEST,
MELISSA. AND
THANKS FOR THE
FLOWERS BOTH
OF YOU!

"...WHERE MELISSA GREVILLE
AND CLIVE RESTON DEPART
FOR NAYLAND SMITH'S
SCOTTISH CASTLE..."

DOUG MOENCH WRITER/PLOT MIKE ZECK ARTIST GENE DAY INKER JANICE CHIANG LETTERER BOB SHAREN COLORIST JIM SALICRUP EDITOR JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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"...WHILE I REMAIN IN THE CITY UNTIL LEIKO RECOVERS FROM HER WOUND.

BUT WHY, LEIKO? YOU STILL HAVE NOT EXPLAINED WHY YOU RUSHED INTO THE FACE OF DANGER ALONE.

"...I GUESS I WAS TRYING TO REASSERT MYSELF SHANG..."

"...TO TRY TO STOP FU MANCHU'S REINCARNATION OF THE RIPPER.

"BESIDES, WHEN SMITH AND I REALIZED WHO WAS MURDERING THOSE WOMEN HERE IN LONDON, THERE WAS NO TIME TO LOSE.

"I HAD TO LEAVE AT ONCE--"

"I'M... I'M ONLY SORRY I FAILED."

YOU SEE, NOW THAT YOU'VE FOUND YOUR "LOST ART OF LIVING" AGAIN-- AND BECOME LESS RELIANT ON ME-- I'VE DECIDED THAT IT'S ALSO TIME TO RECOVER THE INDEPENDENCE I'VE LOST...

"...TO GET BACK TO... BEING MY OLD SELF..."

BUT LEIKO EVEN IF I HAVE FOUND SOME SMALL MEASURE OF MY SPIRIT'S LOST PEACE I NEED YOU NOW NO LESS THAN EVER. MY LOVE FOR YOU IS JUST AS STRONG--OR STRONGER...

I... SEE.

I KNOW SHANG, AND I BELIEVE THAT OUR RESPECT FOR ONE ANOTHER WILL ACTUALLY GROW.

RATHER THAN LOVING BECAUSE WE NEED EACH OTHER... WE WILL NOW LOVE BECAUSE WE WANT EACH OTHER.

"SHE PRESSES TWO FINGERS TO HER LIPS..."

"... THEN, GENTLY TO MINE.

"I SHIVER..."

"... AND DEPART, PLANNING TO STAY AT LEIKO'S SOHO FLAT... WHERE THE MEMORIES OF HER ESSENCE WILL SURROUND ME LIKE GHOSTS OF BEAUTY HAUNTING THE VERY AIR.

"I PASS TWO SURGEONS
IN THE HALL, AT FIRST
GIVING THEM NO
SECOND THOUGHT.

"BUT THREE
STEPS BEYOND--

"-- I PAUSE, SUDDENLY
DISTURBED BY THEM...
BY THEIR SHARED ATTITUDE,
THE WAY THEY CARRIED
THEIR BODIES...

"...BY THEIR
MASKS...

"INDEED, WHY SHOULD
THEY WISH TO CONTAIN
THE GERMS OF THEIR
BREATH HERE IN THE
HALL...

"AND ON THEIR FEET--
DIRTY, SCUFFED RUNNING
SHOES...

"SOMETHING IS WRONG. SOMETHING
MUST BE--

"...OR DO THEY
MERELY WISH
TO MASK THEIR
FACES--?"

"...AND JAPANESE
SLIPPERS--"

KRASH

"THAT SOUND--
FROM THE ROOM
THEY ENTERED."

"THEN IT WAS *NOT*
MY IMAGINATION.

"THEY ARE *FALSE* HEALERS. SMOTHERING
THE LIFE FROM AN AGED PATIENT--

"-- SEEKING TO
KILL RATHER
THAN *SAVE*!"



"IT'S THE CHINESE
FROM THE HALL
--GET HIM!"

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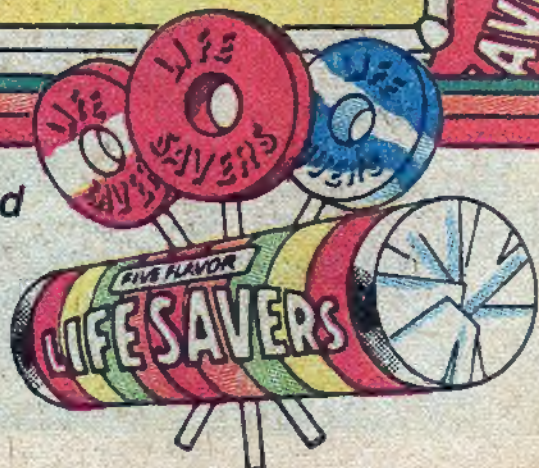
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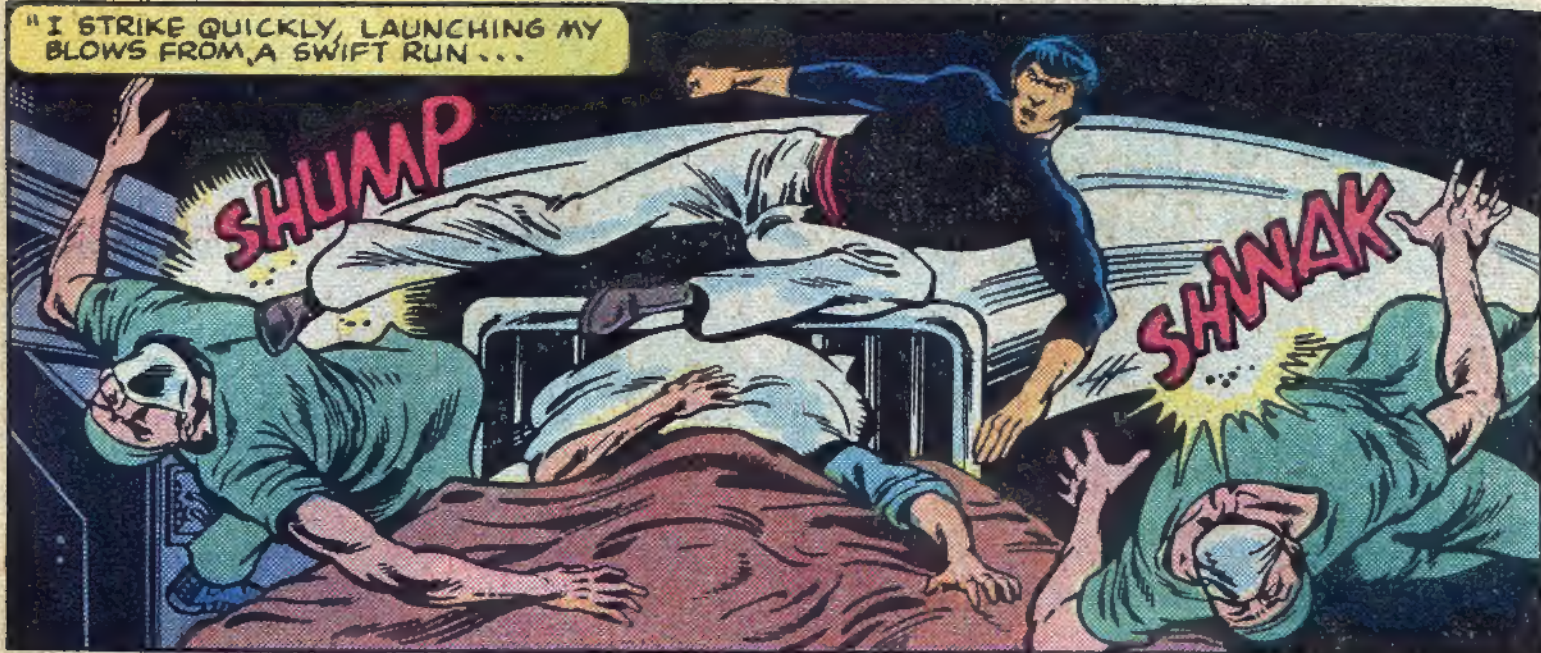
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to do!*



"I STRIKE QUICKLY, LAUNCHING MY
BLOWS FROM A SWIFT RUN..."



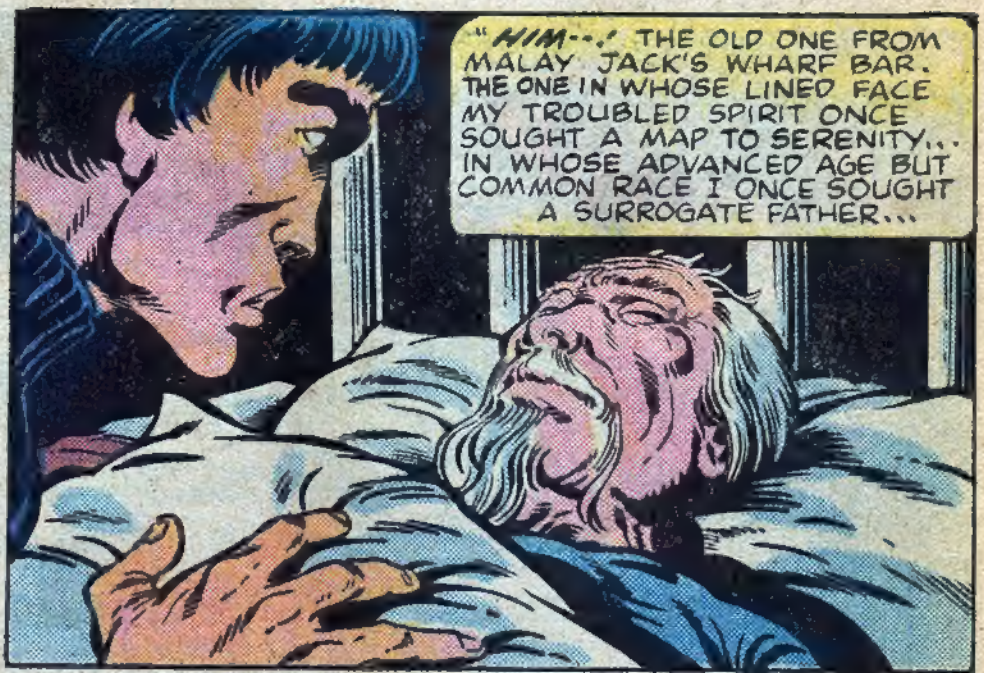
"...SWEEPING ASIDE THE BEST
EFFORTS OF ACCOMPLISHED FIGHTERS."



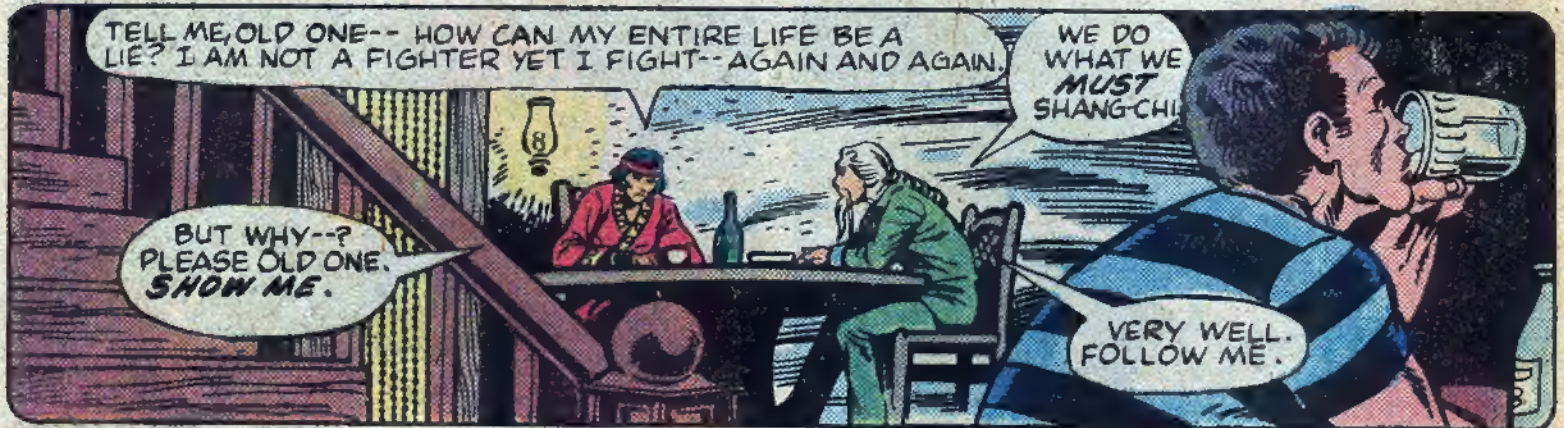
"BUT HAVE I STRUCK IN TIME--?
THE PILLOW STILL MASKS THE
FACE."

"HE DOES
NOT MOVE"

"IS HE ALREADY DEAD... OR--"



"HIM--" THE OLD ONE FROM
MALAY JACK'S WHARF BAR.
THE ONE IN WHOSE LINED FACE
MY TROUBLED SPIRIT ONCE
SOUGHT A MAP TO SERENITY...
IN WHOSE ADVANCED AGE BUT
COMMON RACE I ONCE SOUGHT
A SURROGATE FATHER...



TELL ME, OLD ONE-- HOW CAN MY ENTIRE LIFE BE A
LIE? I AM NOT A FIGHTER YET I FIGHT-- AGAIN AND AGAIN.

WE DO
WHAT WE
MUST
SHANG-CHI

BUT WHY--?
PLEASE OLD ONE.
SHOW ME.

VERY WELL.
FOLLOW ME.

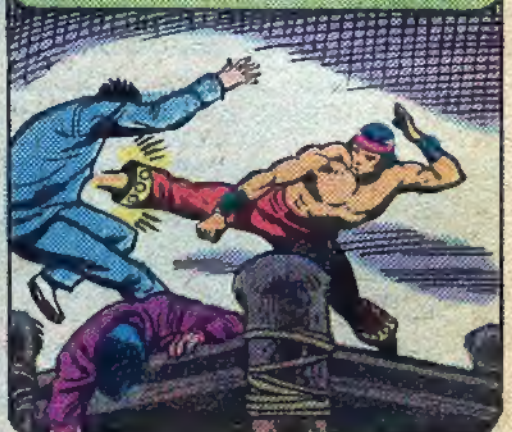
"AND HE LED ME FROM THE
TAVERN SMOKE THROUGH A
DOORWAY OF HANGING BEADS...



"...STRAIGHT INTO BETRAYAL
FORGIVE ME SHANG-CHI, BUT
THERE IS ONE WHO WISHES TO
HAVE YOU BROUGHT--TO HIM."



"THE BETRAYAL THEN LED TO
A FIGHT ON THE DOCKS..."



"...AND THE FIGHT LED TO BLOOD..."

WHY--? WHY DID THE OLD
ONE BETRAY ME--?

FOR...FOR
MONEY.



"FROM THE BLOOD I MOVED
THROUGH SMOKE AND BEADS
TO CONFRONT THE OLD ONE."

HERE. BUY BACK
YOUR SOUL.



"BUT EVEN AS I LEFT I REGRETTED
MY PETTY GESTURE KNOWING
THAT I SHOULD HAVE BEEN
MORE COMPASSIONATE--OR AT
LEAST DIGNIFIED--ABOUT IT..."



"DESPITE THE
KNOWLEDGE,
I WAS NOT."

"AND SINCE THAT FINAL CONFRONTATION WITH THE OLD ONE, THE KNOWLEDGE HAS NAGGED ME... SHAMED ME..."

"NOW I MEET HIM AGAIN, FACING A CHANCE TO ATONE, ONLY TO FIND HIM..."

"... DEAD?"

"NO."

SH-SHANG-CHI... HE WHOSE NAME MEANS "THE RISING AND ADVANCING OF A SPIRIT"... BUT HAS YOUR SPIRIT RISEN, FINALLY... TO JOIN ME... IN THE HEAVENS...?

YOU ARE NOT DEAD, OLD ONE. THE TWO ASSASSINS FAILED.

THEN TELL ME, SHANG-CHI... HAVE YOU YET LEARNED TO REMAIN TRUE TO THE SPIRIT OF YOUR NAME... OR DOES THE **SOUND** OF YOUR NAME STILL SIGNAL NOTHING BUT VIOLENCE...?

BOTH, OLD ONE...

... BUT I HAVE LEARNED, AT LAST, OR AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, TO COME TO TERMS WITH EACH.

THEN WE HAVE EXCHANGED PLACES, YOU AND I, YOUNG SHANG-CHI. WHERE ONCE YOU PLEADED WITH ME TO HELP SALVAGE YOUR LIFE... I MUST PLEAD WITH YOU, NOW, TO LITERALLY **SAVE** MY LIFE...

NO. YOU HAVE JUST RENDERED TWO ASSASSINS UNCONSCIOUS. LIMEHOUSE CRAWLS WITH THEIR BROTHERS, AND THEY NEVER TRULY DIE. I ONCE TOLD YOU, SHANG-CHI, THAT WE DO WHAT WE MUST. ONCE I THOUGHT I MUST DO SOMETHING. I SOLD OPIUM.

NOW I KNOW I WAS WRONG, AND I MUST DO THE OPPOSITE-- STOP THOSE WHO SELL THE DRUG BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE... BEFORE THEY STOP ME, TO ENSURE MY SILENCE...

I TOLD YOU -- I JUST DID.

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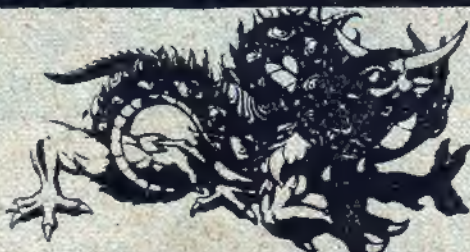
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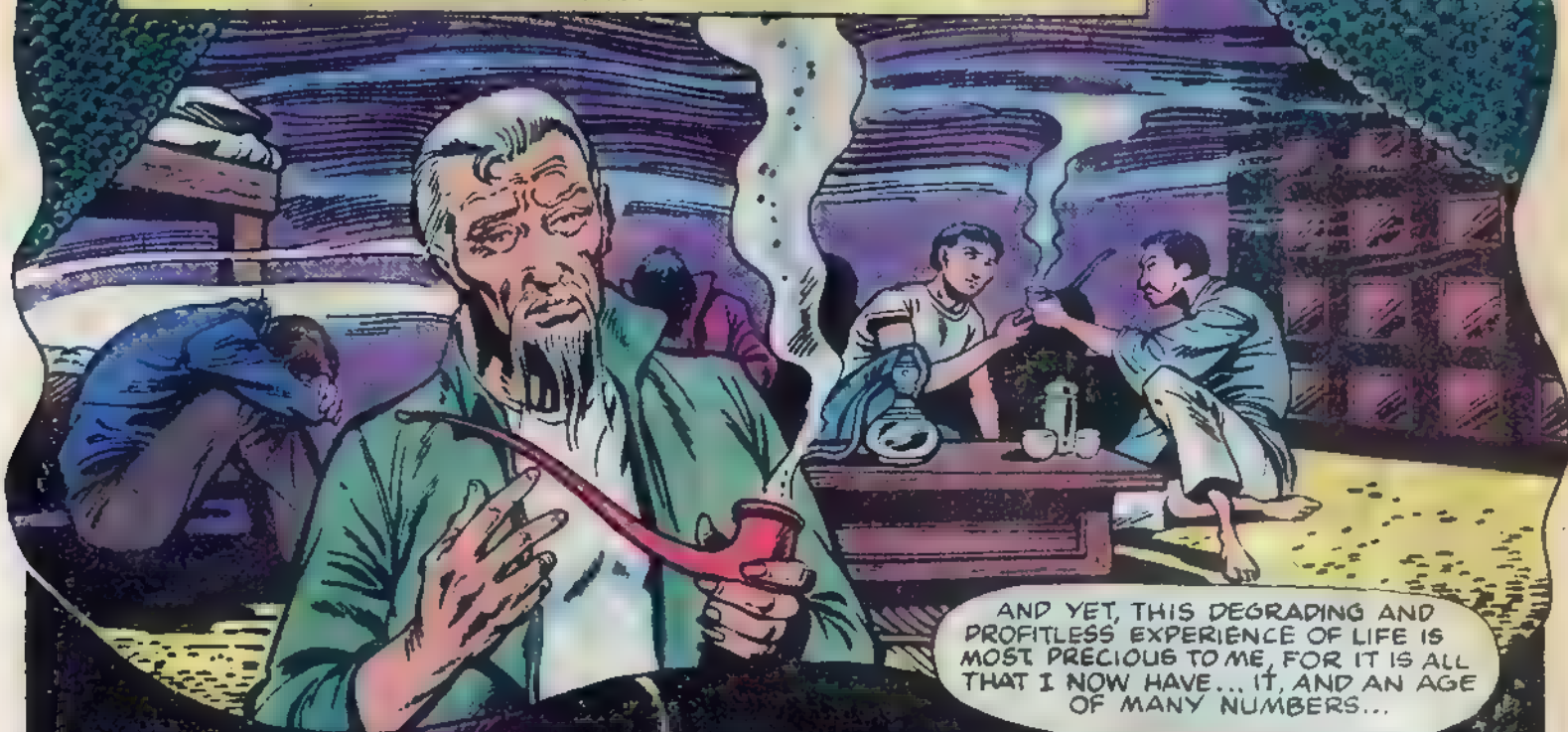
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"I HAVE SOLD DREAMS ALL MY LIFE, BUT I HAVE GAINED NOTHING FROM THESE DARK BARTERS, NOTHING BUT A FORM OF PROFITLESS EXPERIENCE... AND I HAVE PAID DEARLY FOR THIS EXPERIENCE WITH THE COIN OF LIFE... EMPTYING A PURSE THAT CAN NEVER BE REFILLED..."



AND YET, THIS DEGRADING AND PROFITLESS EXPERIENCE OF LIFE IS MOST PRECIOUS TO ME, FOR IT IS ALL THAT I NOW HAVE... IT, AND AN AGE OF MANY NUMBERS...

WHY DID THEY TRY TO KILL YOU, OLD ONE?

THE OPIUM TRADE HAS CHANGED, THE NEW PURVEYORS MAKING IT EVEN MORE SORDID AND DEGRADING, SELLING DREAMS TO CHILDREN AND WOMEN, THEN SELLING THE DRUG-LOST CHILDREN AND WOMEN THEMSELVES. SOME OF THESE DEALERS ARE STILL CHINESE, SOME CAUCASIAN, AND SOME JAPANESE... THE YAKUZA.

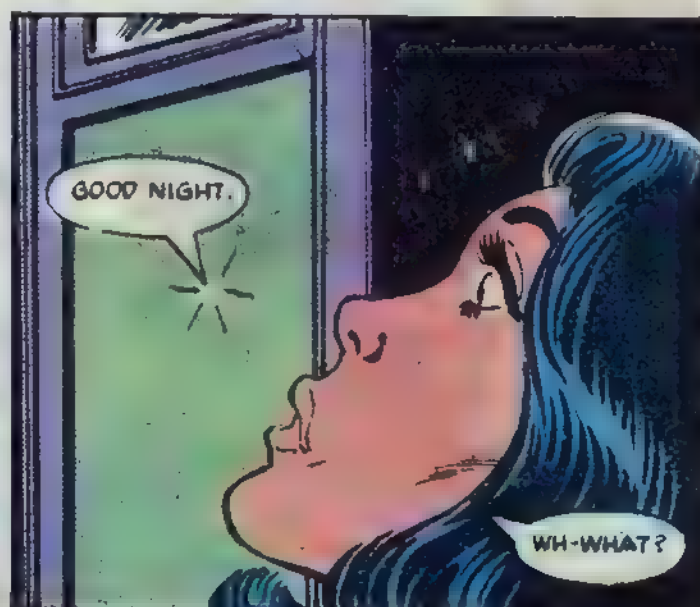
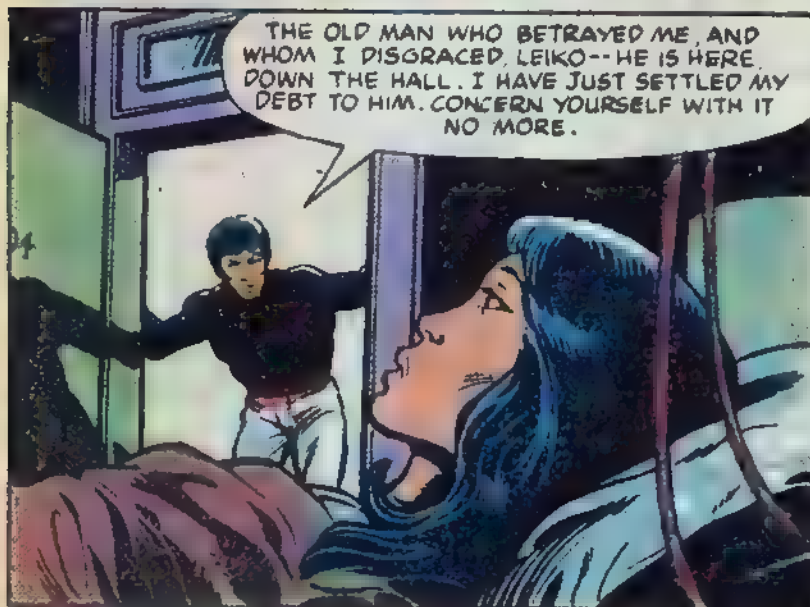
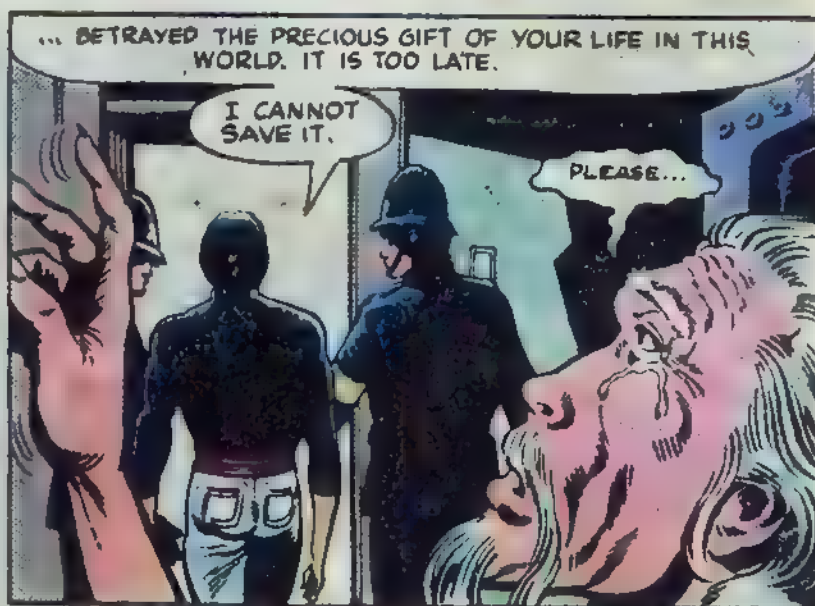
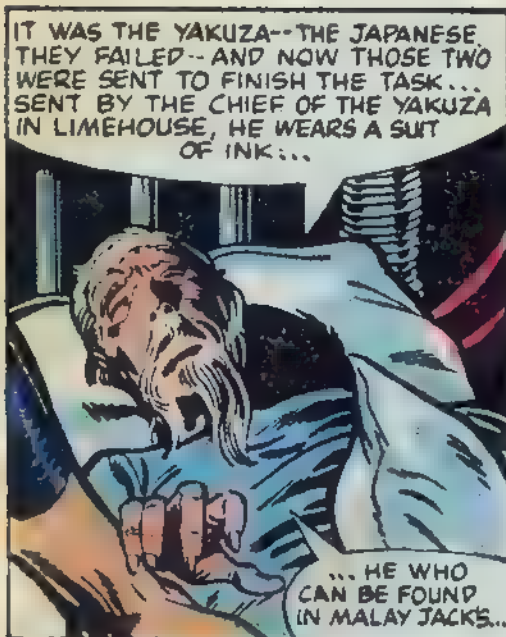
BUT ALL ARE GANGSTERS, ALL ARE MONSTERS.

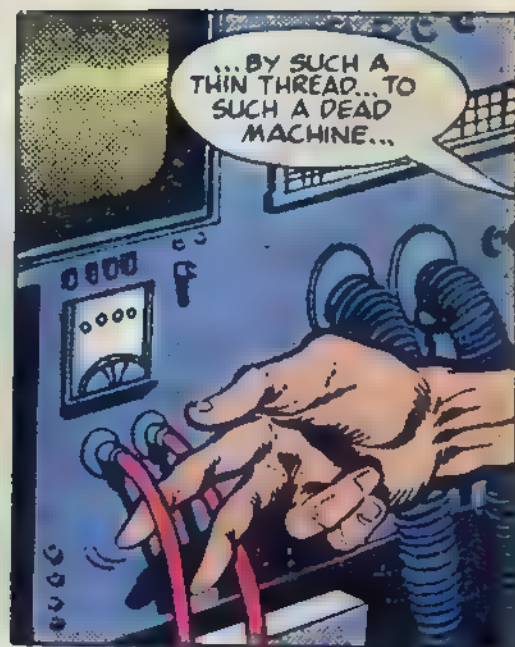
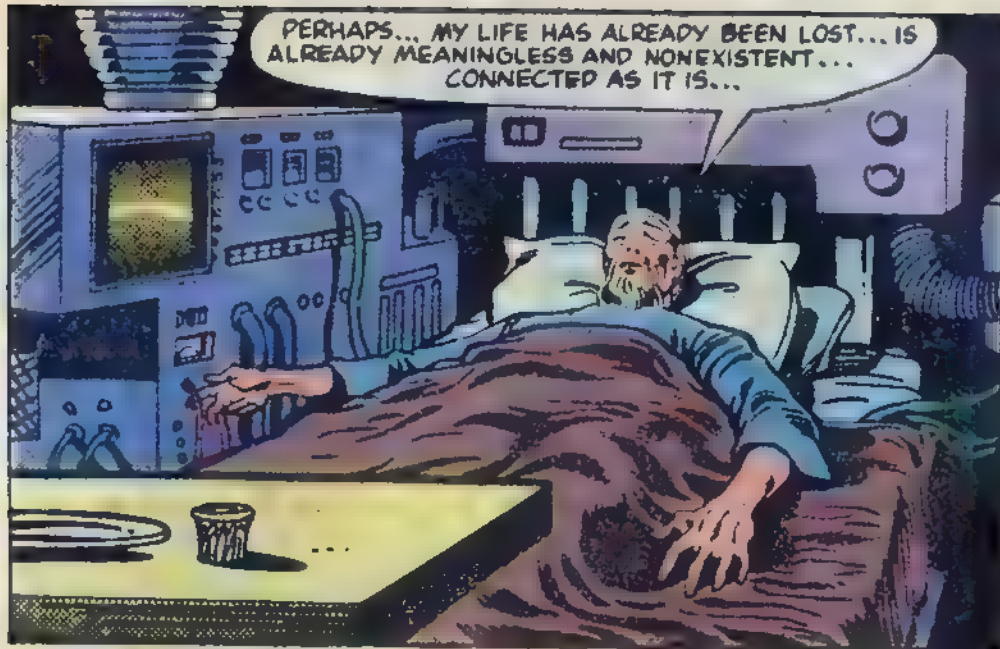
"IT WAS TOO LATE TO ATONE FOR MY OWN PAST, I KNEW THAT... BUT I ALSO KNEW THE OTHERS HAD TO BE STOPPED AND I POSSESSED THE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR DEALINGS TO STOP THEM..."

PKOW

"...AND THEY TRIED TO STOP ME."

"BUT SOMEHOW THEY KNEW..."

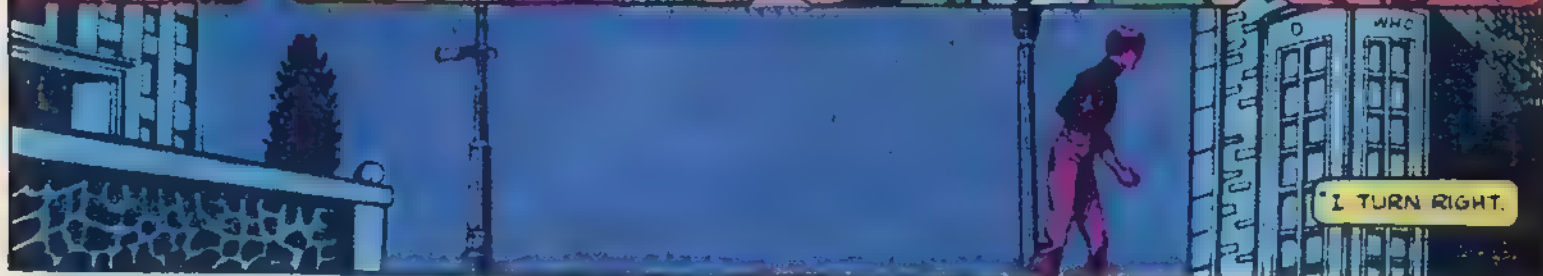




"INDEED, HOW CAN I CLAIM TO HAVE REGAINED THE LOST ART OF LIFE--ENLIGHTENMENT WITHOUT PEDANTRY, JUSTICE WITHOUT JUDGEMENT, SERENITY WITHOUT IDLENESS--THE EFFORTLESS PERFECTION OF HONOR AND GRACE--"

"--IF I LET A FELLOW CREATURE DIE... EVEN A CREATURE WHO PERHAPS DESERVES TO DIE...?"

"I REACH THE CORNER. TO THE LEFT LIES LEIKO'S FLAT. TO THE RIGHT...MALAY JACK'S TAVERN. A TURNING POINT..."



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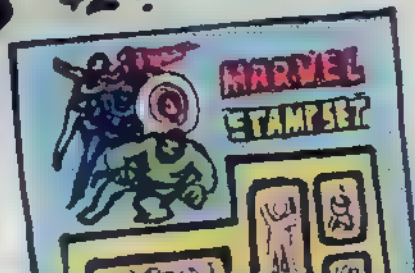
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"LONDON'S LIMEHOUSE DISTRICT... AND AGAIN THE BOATS ON FOG-
BOUND WATERS CRY THEIR MOURNFUL, MOCKING QUESTION..."

M

WHOOOO

"WHO...?"

"I AM SHANG-CHI, A FATHERLESS
SON BY CHOICE, BUT ONLY BECAUSE
I HAVE CHOSEN THE LESSER OF
THE TWO EVILS-- AND I MUST
HONOR THE SPIRIT OF MY NAME.
IF THE OLD ONE SPOKE IN TRUTH,
THEN HE MUST BE SAVED... AND
THE YAKUZA STOPPED."

"INSIDE--THE ONE HE SPOKE OF..."

... THE ONE
WHO WEARS
A SUIT OF
INK...

YOU WISH TO SMOKE?
A WOMAN? A CHILD,
PERHAPS...

COME WITH ME.
ALL AWAITS YOU
IN THE BACK...

"I MOVE
DEEPER INTO
THE FOG DRIFTING
FROM THE
RIVER..."

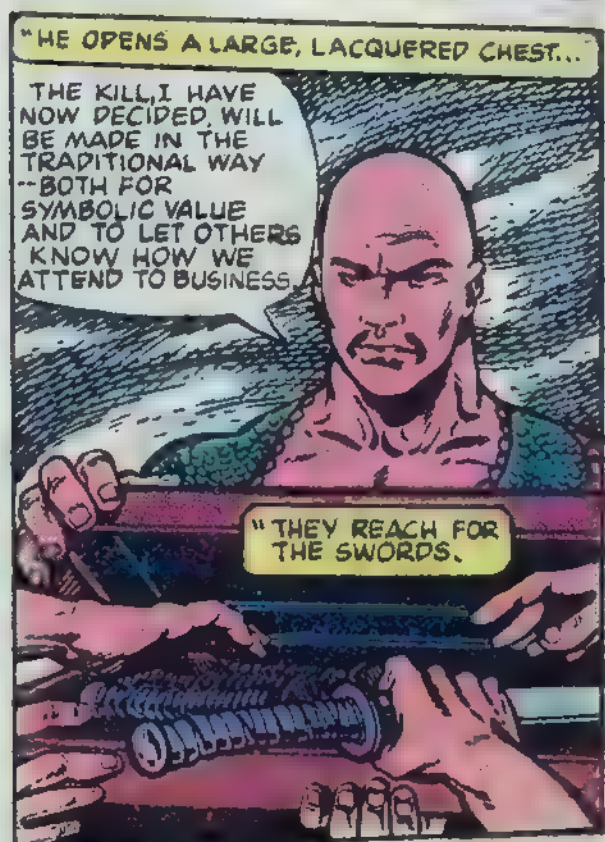
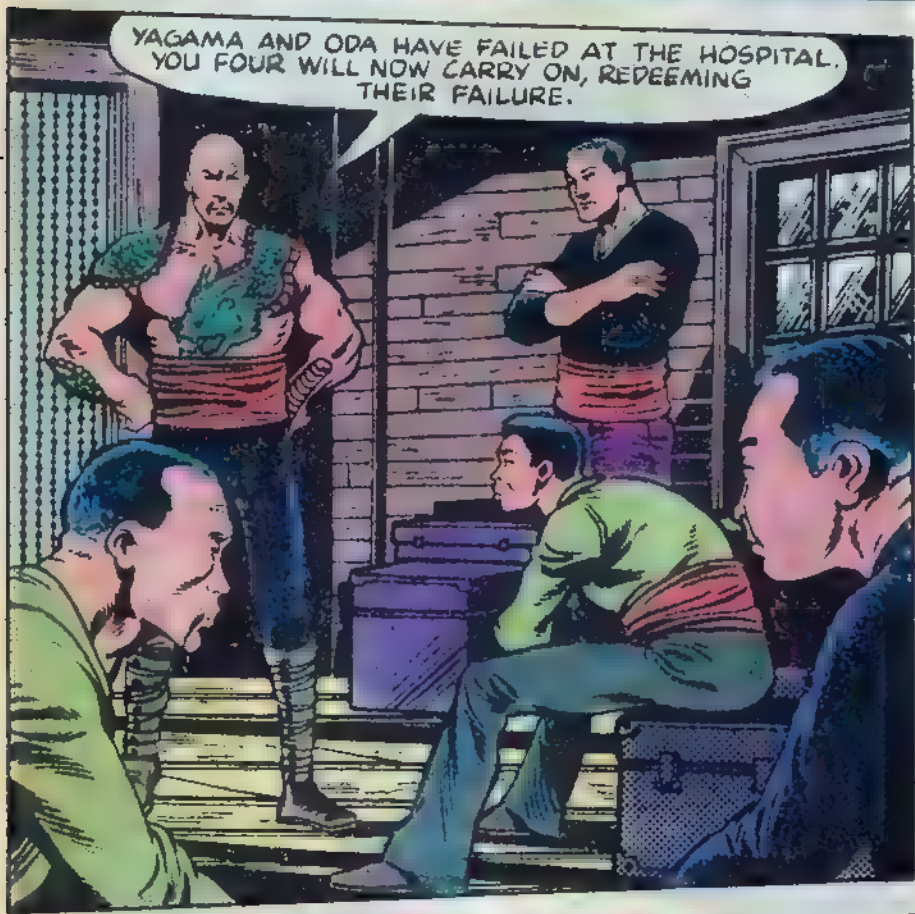
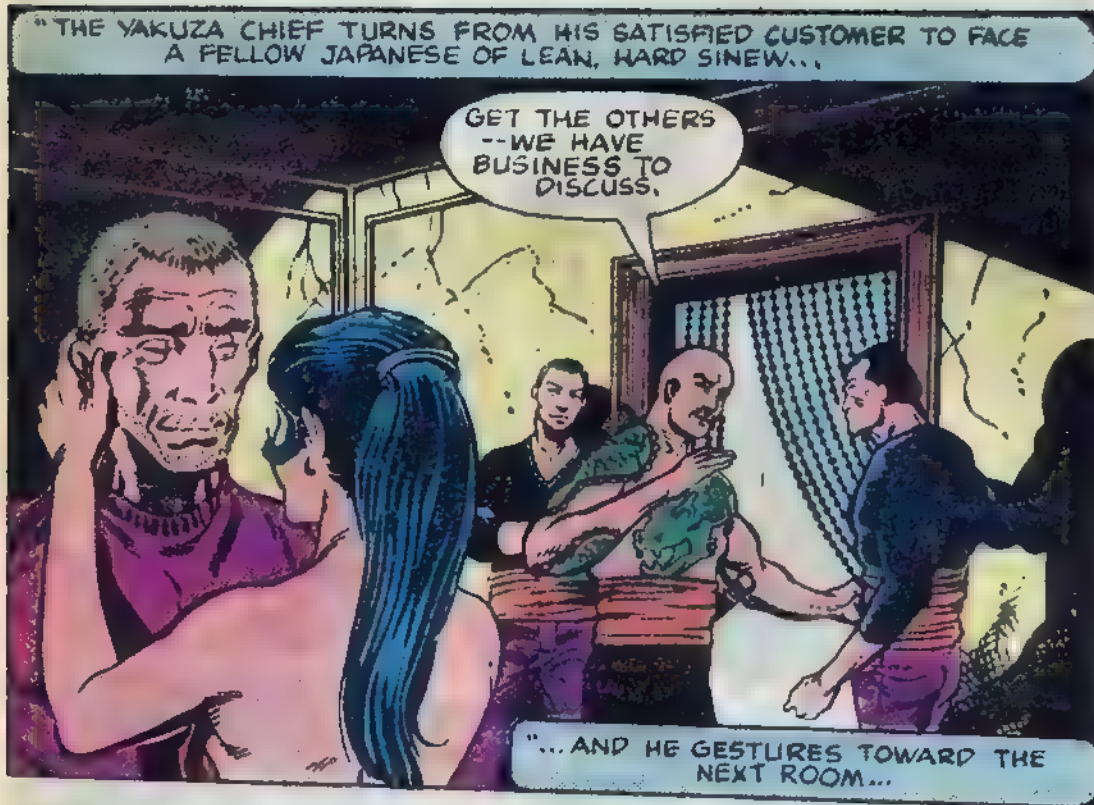
"YES... THERE IS A
REAR WINDOW, TOO..."

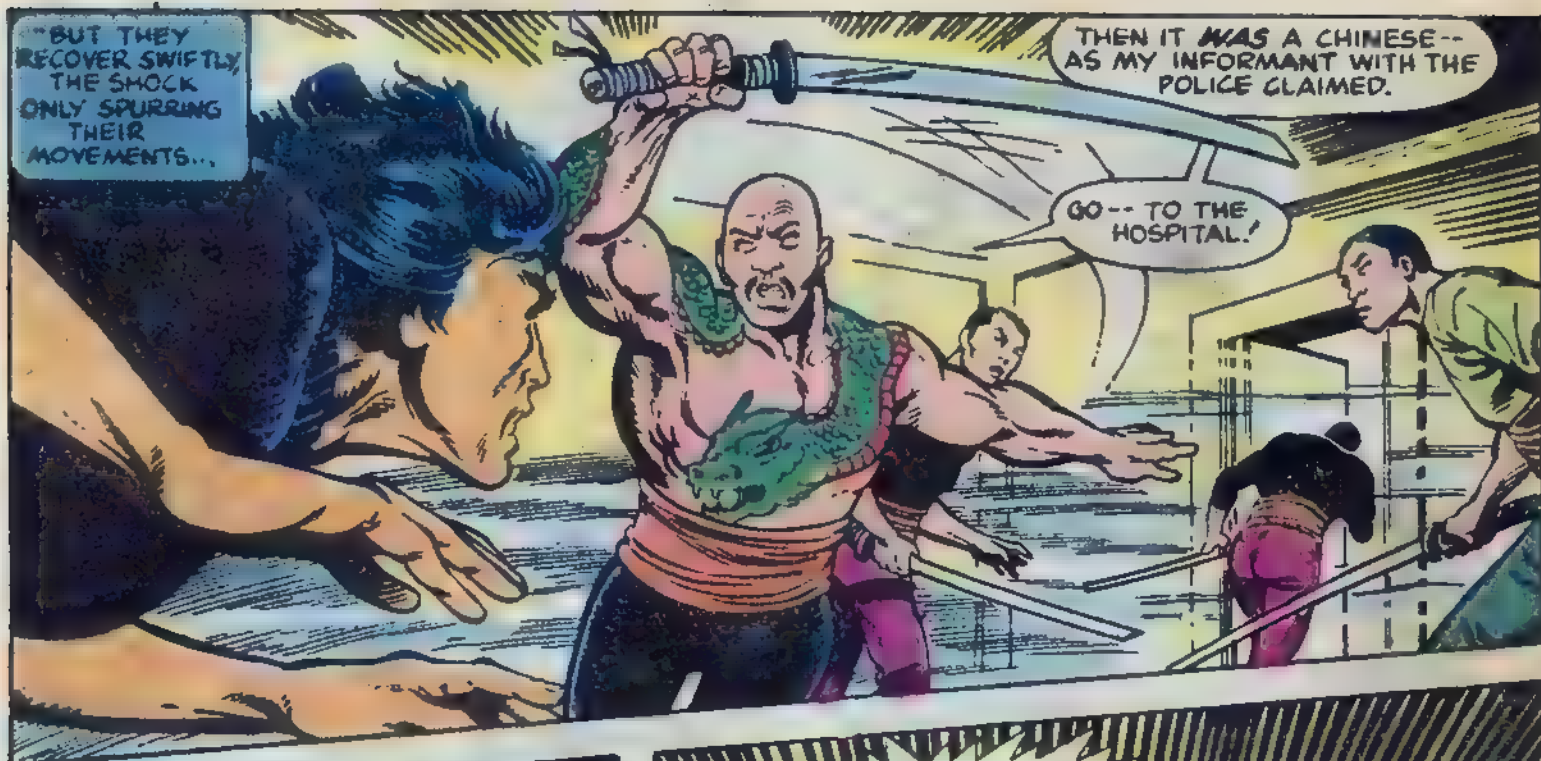
"INSIDE, THE SMOKE
IS THICKER THAN THE
OUTER FOG..."

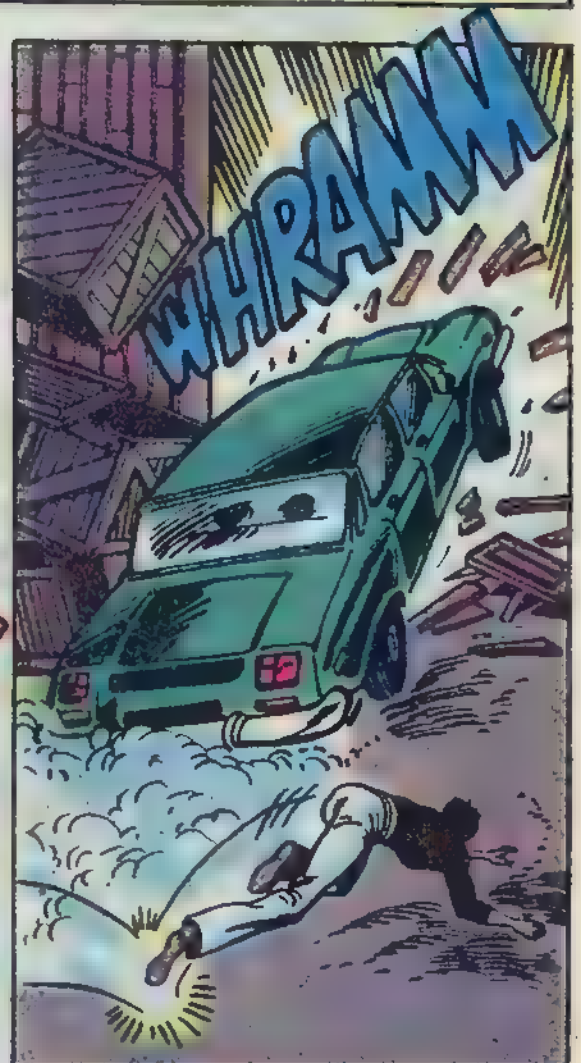
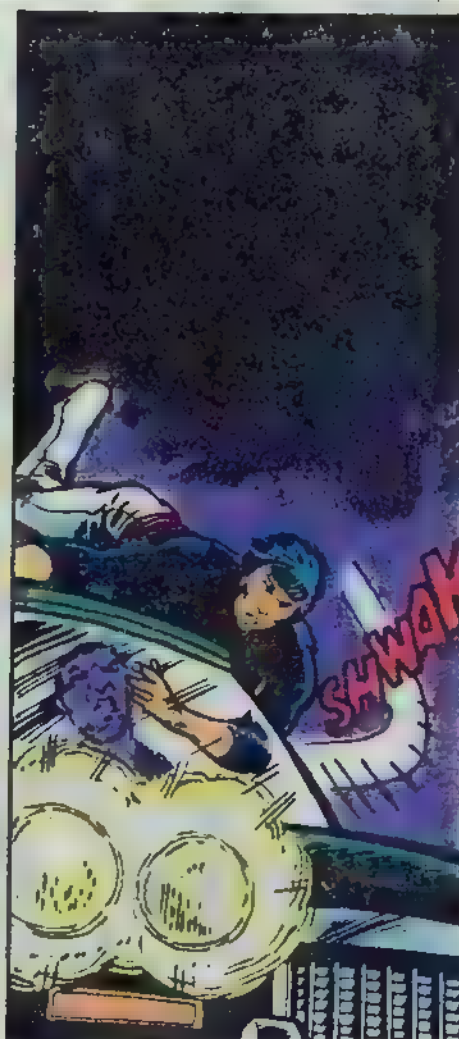
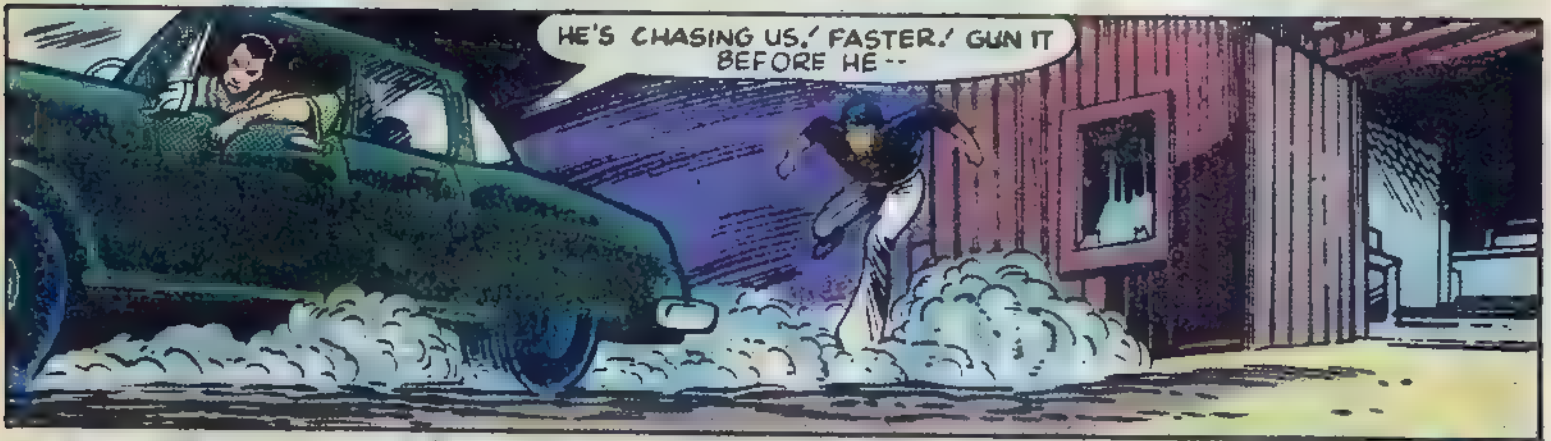
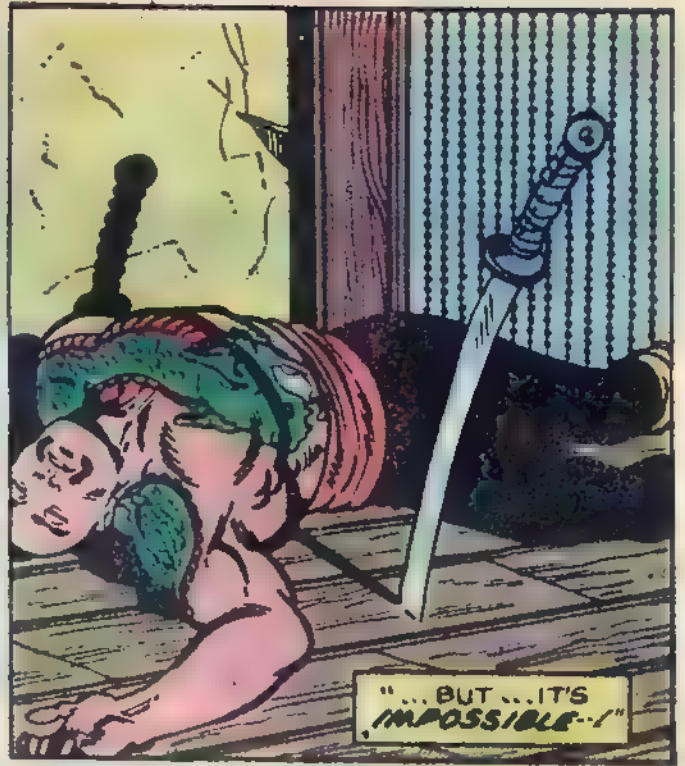
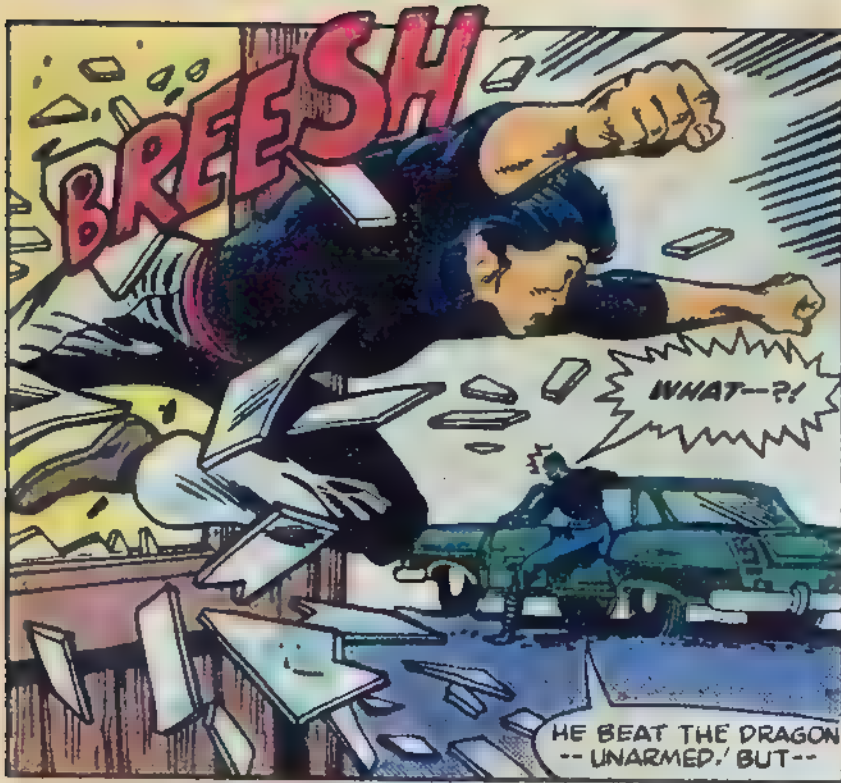
HERE-- DESPITE HER AGE, THIS ONE IS WISE IN THE
ETERNAL WAYS OF WOMEN, ATTUNED TO THE ETERNAL WAYS
OF MEN.

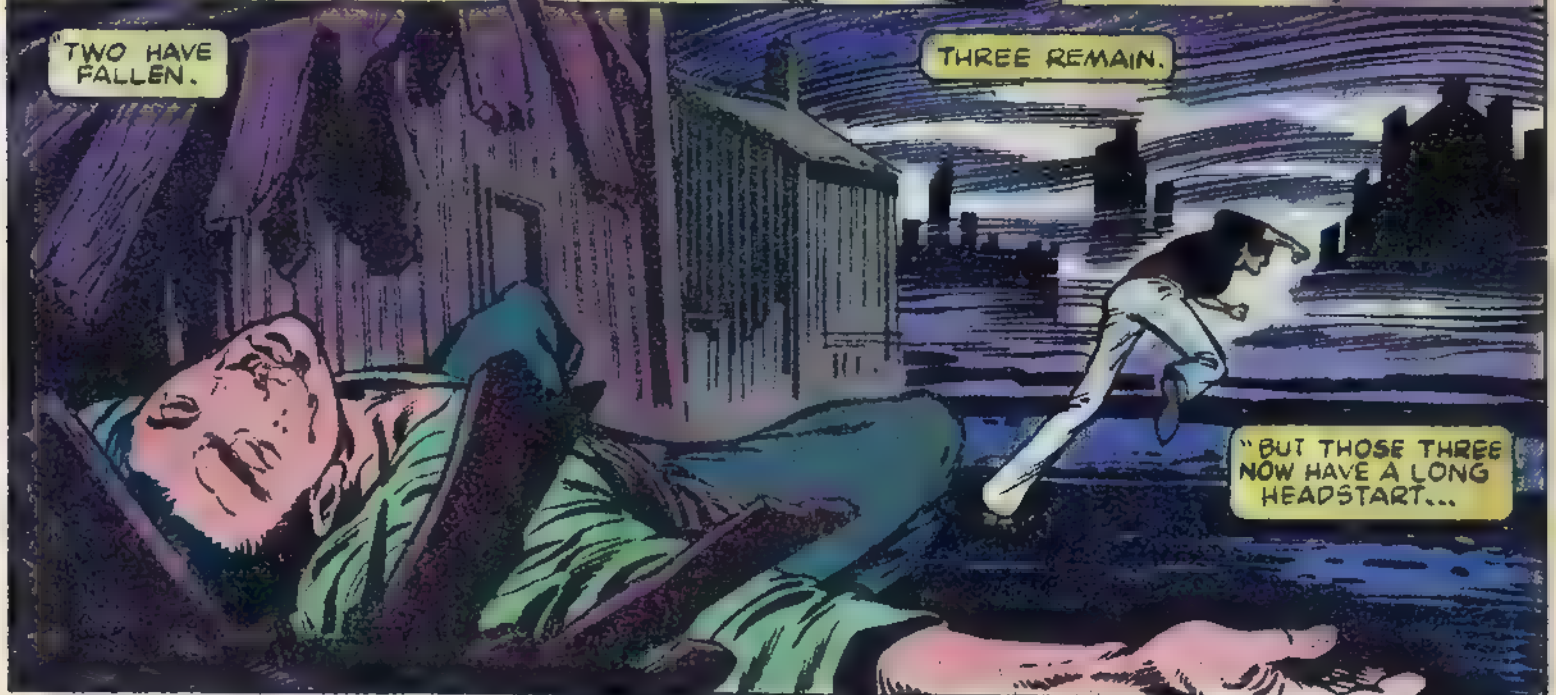
ENJOY.

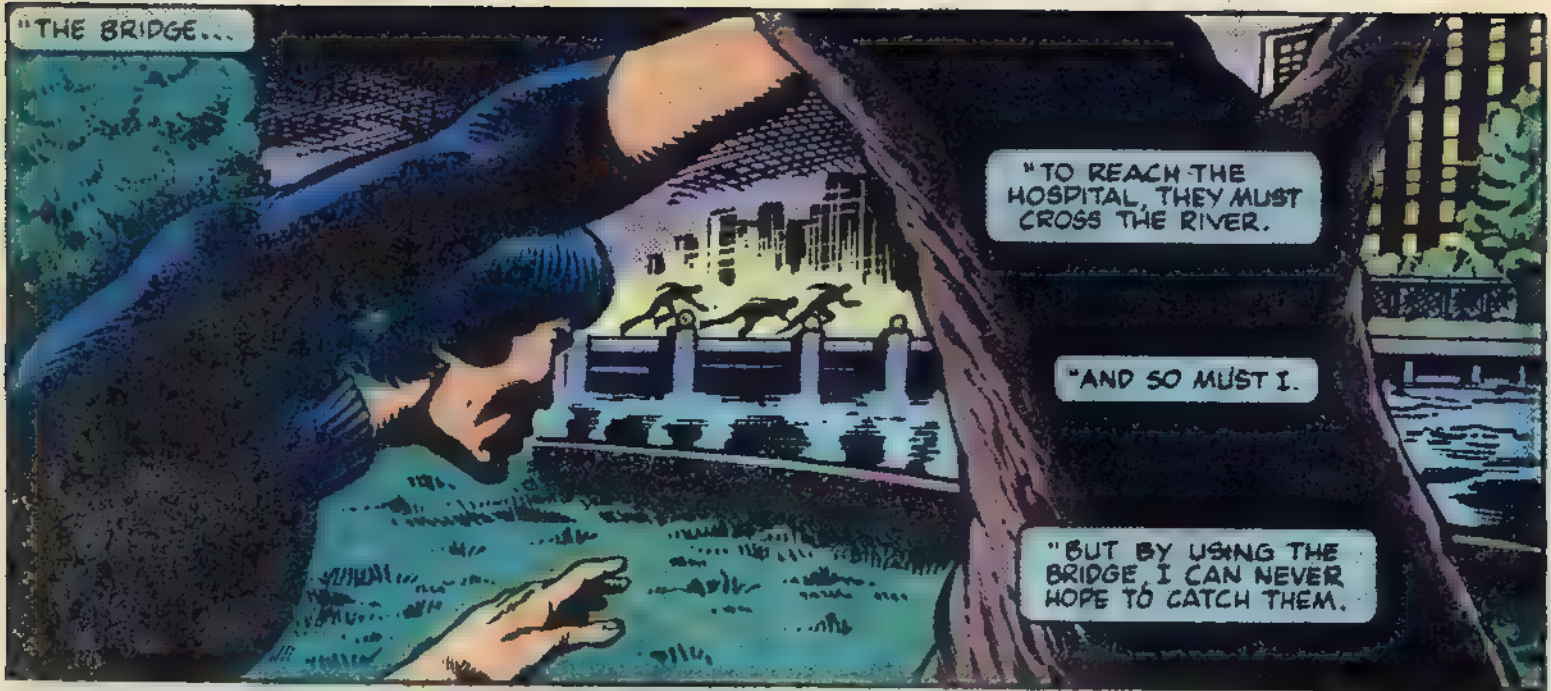
THE OLD ONE THEN DID
NOT LIE ABOUT THIS MUCH.











"THE BRIDGE..."

"TO REACH THE HOSPITAL, THEY MUST CROSS THE RIVER."

"AND SO MUST I."

"BUT BY USING THE BRIDGE, I CAN NEVER HOPE TO CATCH THEM."



"AND SO..."



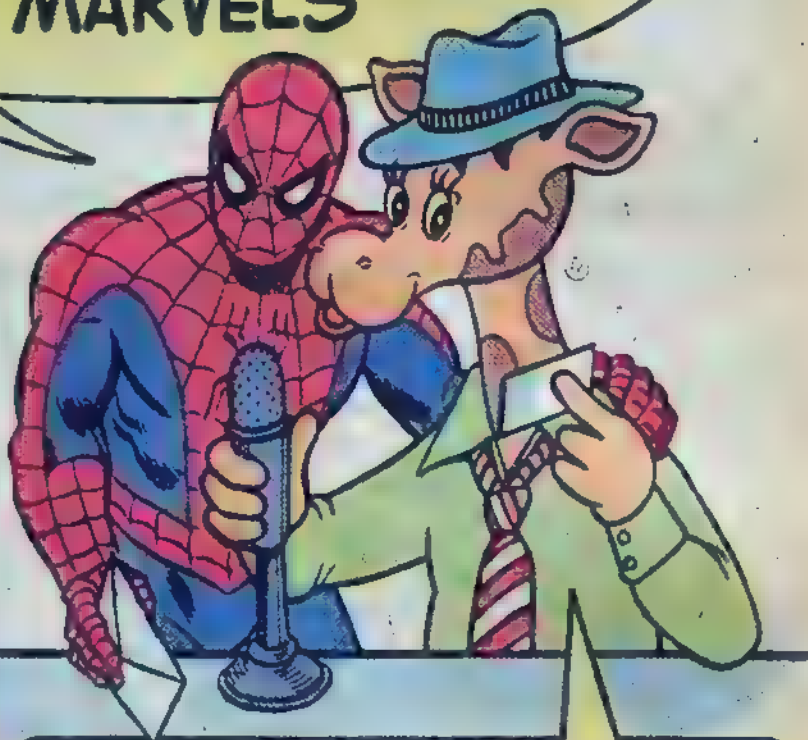
THE CHINESE AGAIN.
BUT HOW--?!

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IN MIGHTY MARVEL'S

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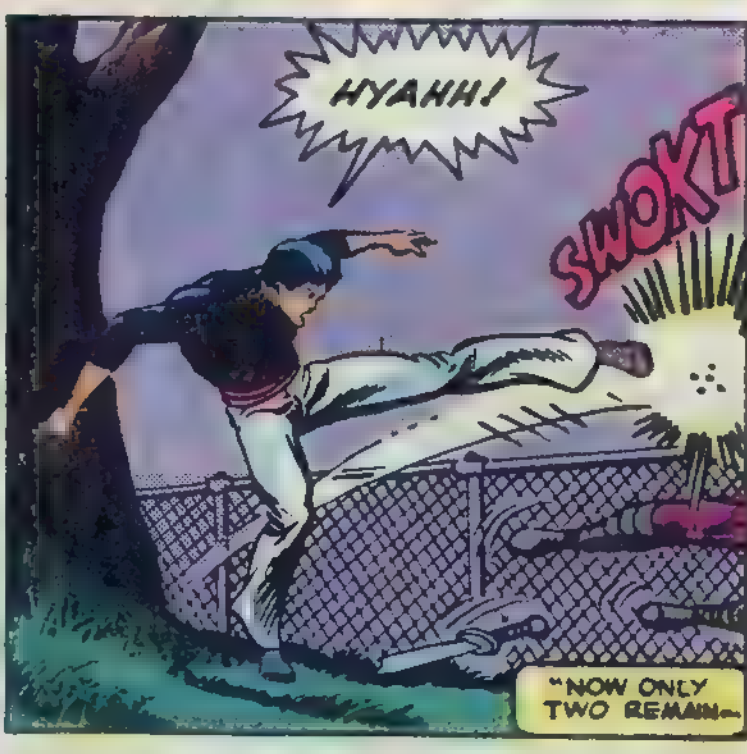
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"THE ROUTINE REMAINS THE SAME."

"ONE SCRAMBLES ONWARD TOWARD THE HOSPITAL..."



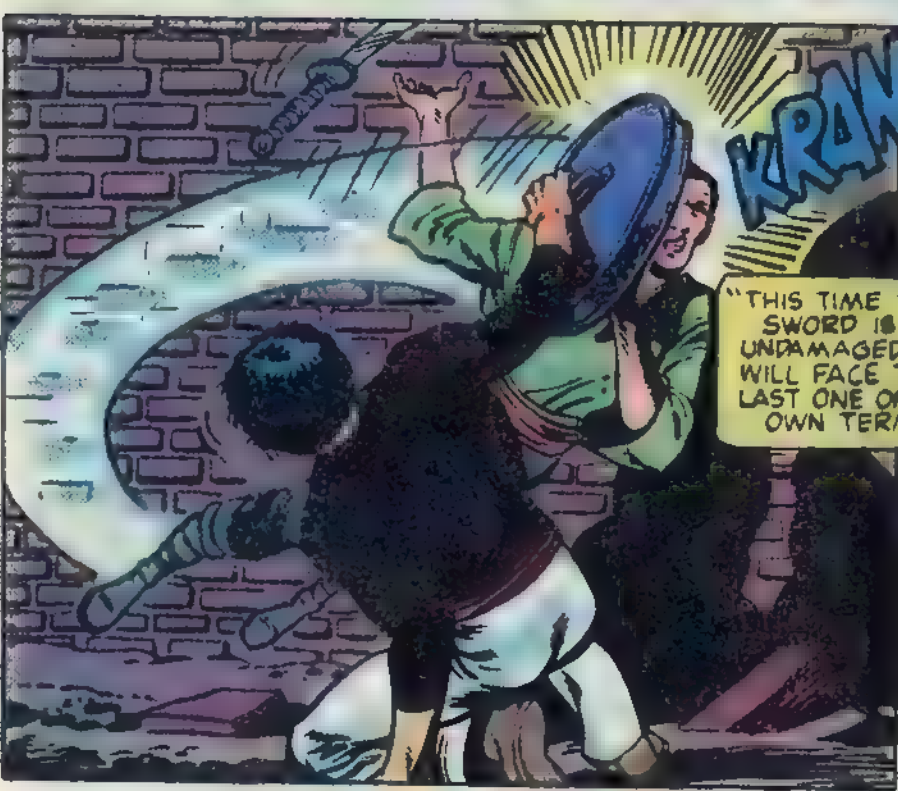
"...LEAVING HIS FELLOW TO STOP ME..."



KLANG

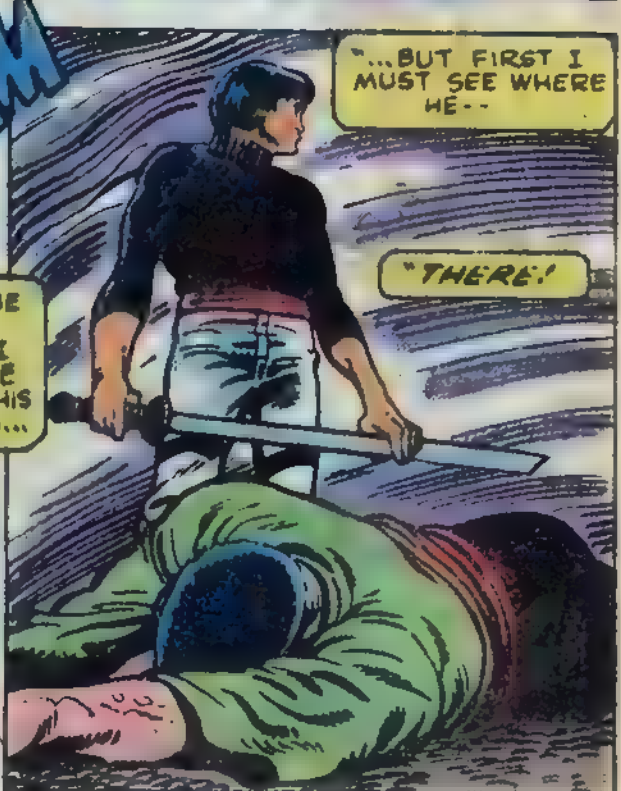


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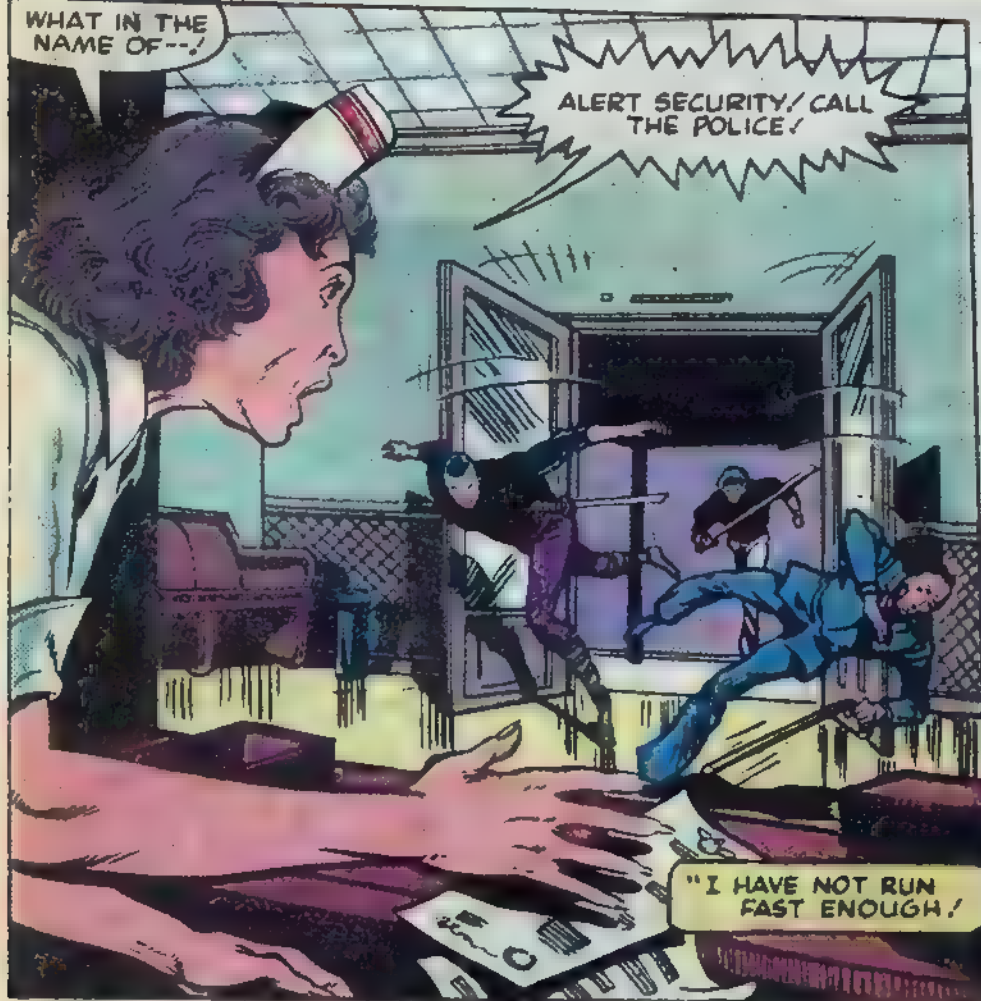
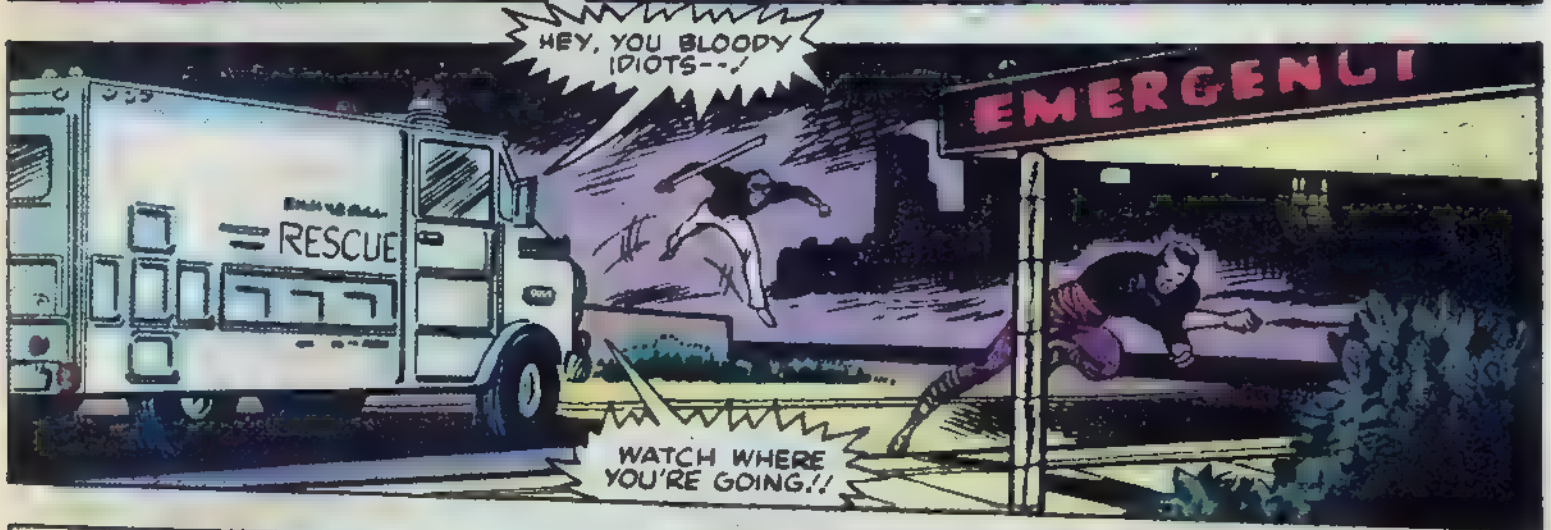
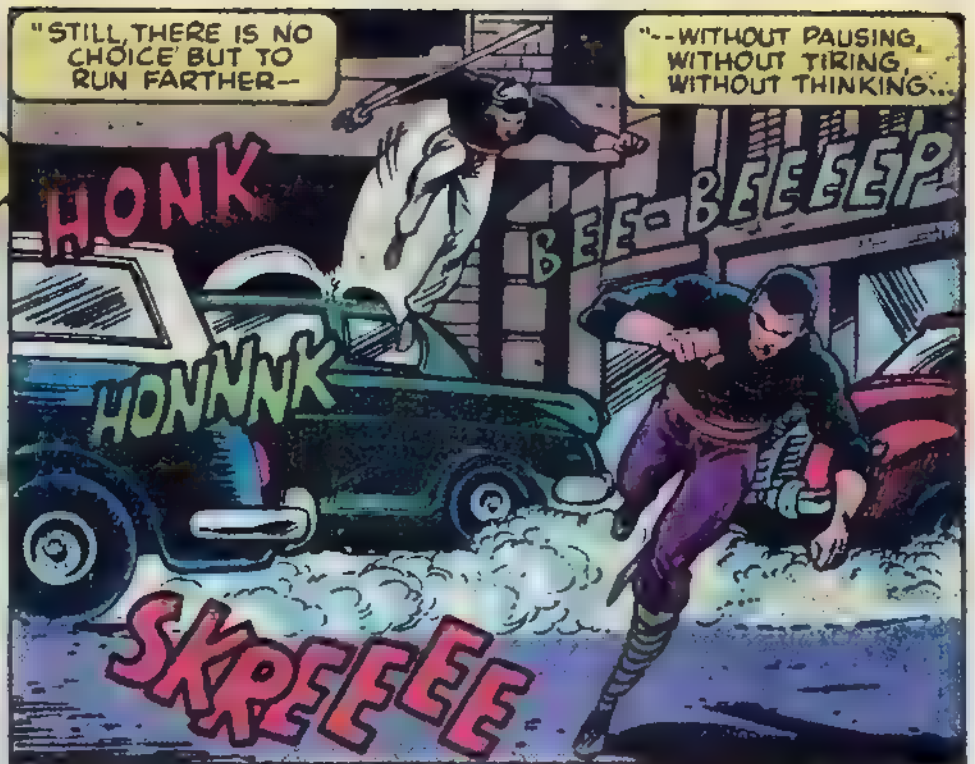
KRAAAA

"THIS TIME THE SWORD IS UNDAAGED. I WILL FACE THE LAST ONE ON HIS OWN TERMS..."



"...BUT FIRST I MUST SEE WHERE HE--"

"THERE!"



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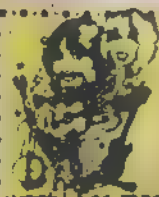
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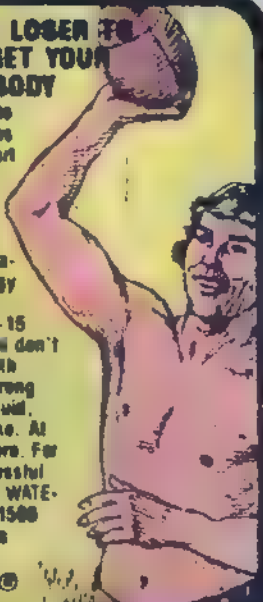
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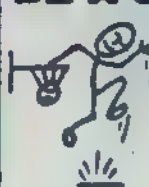
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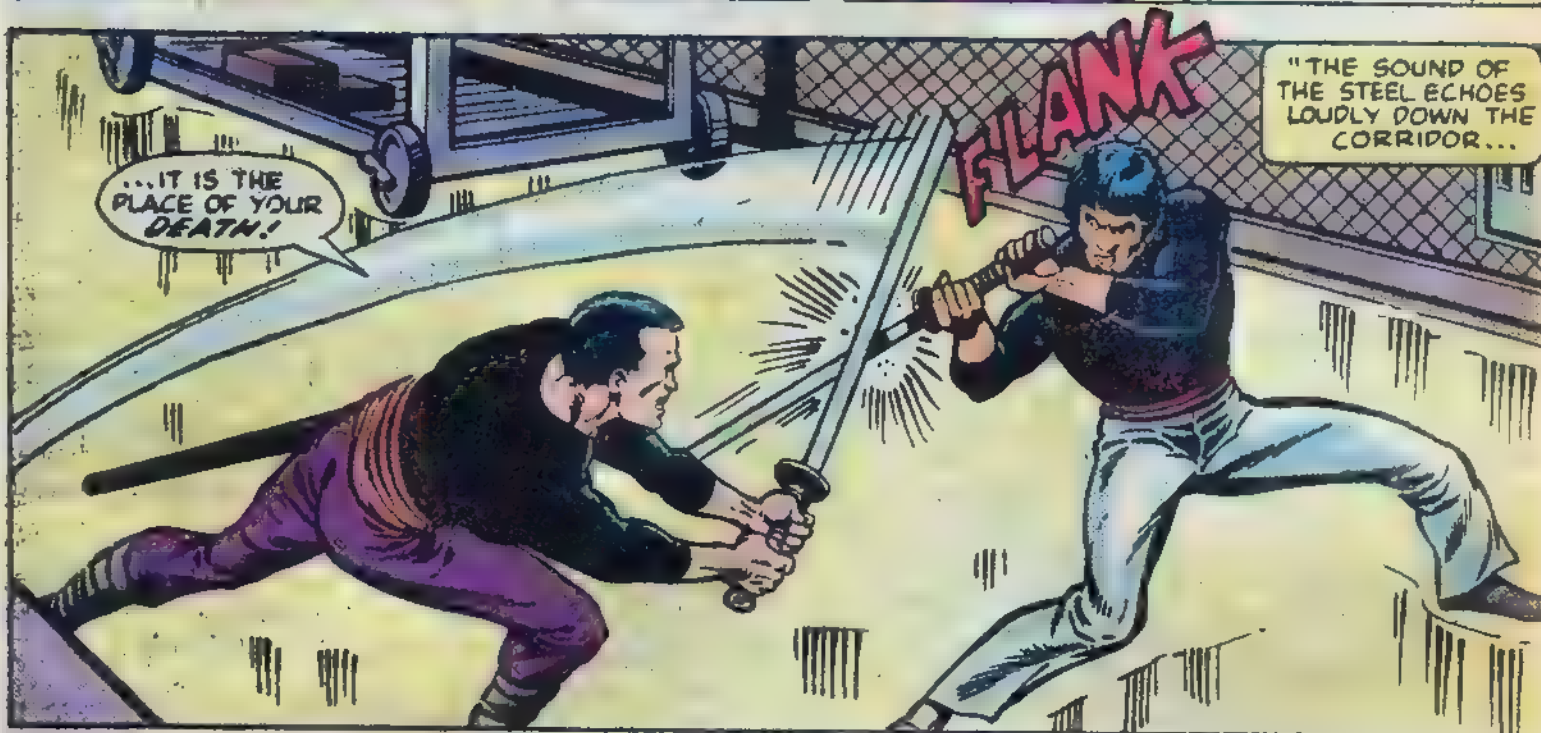
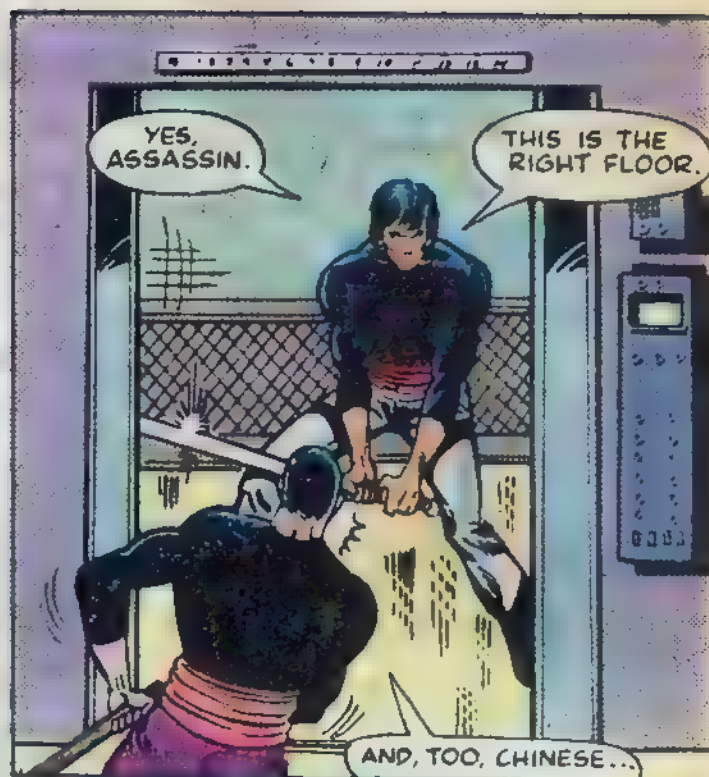
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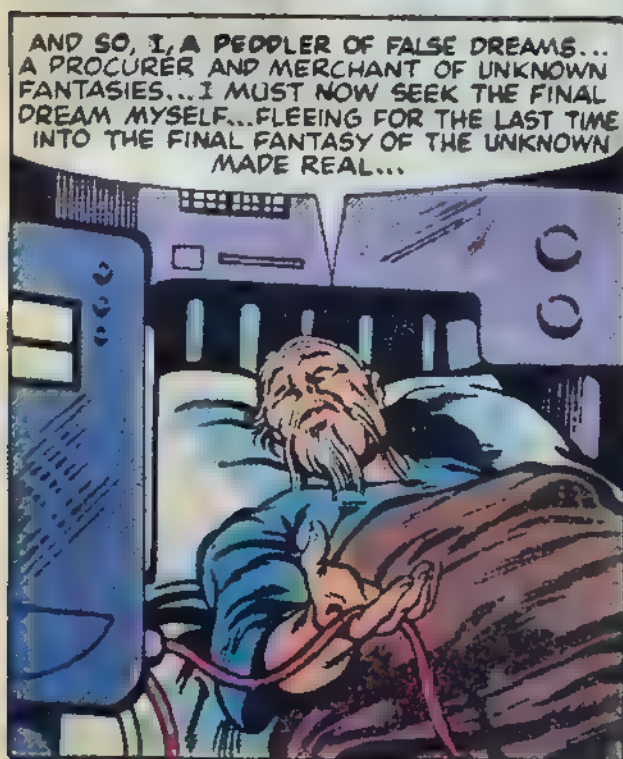
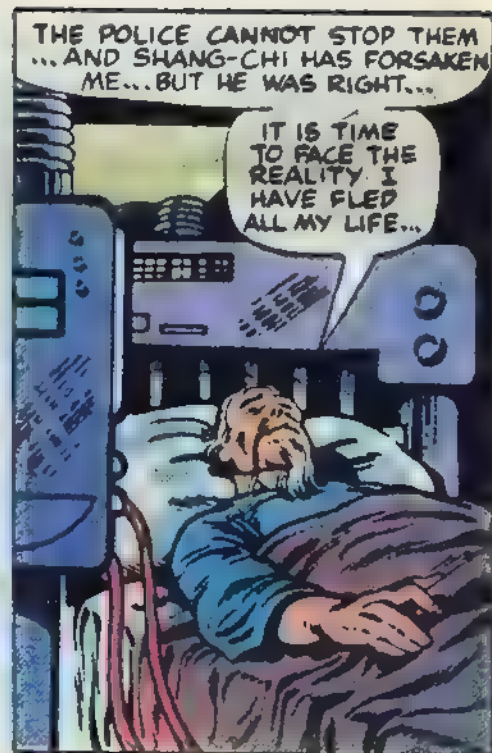


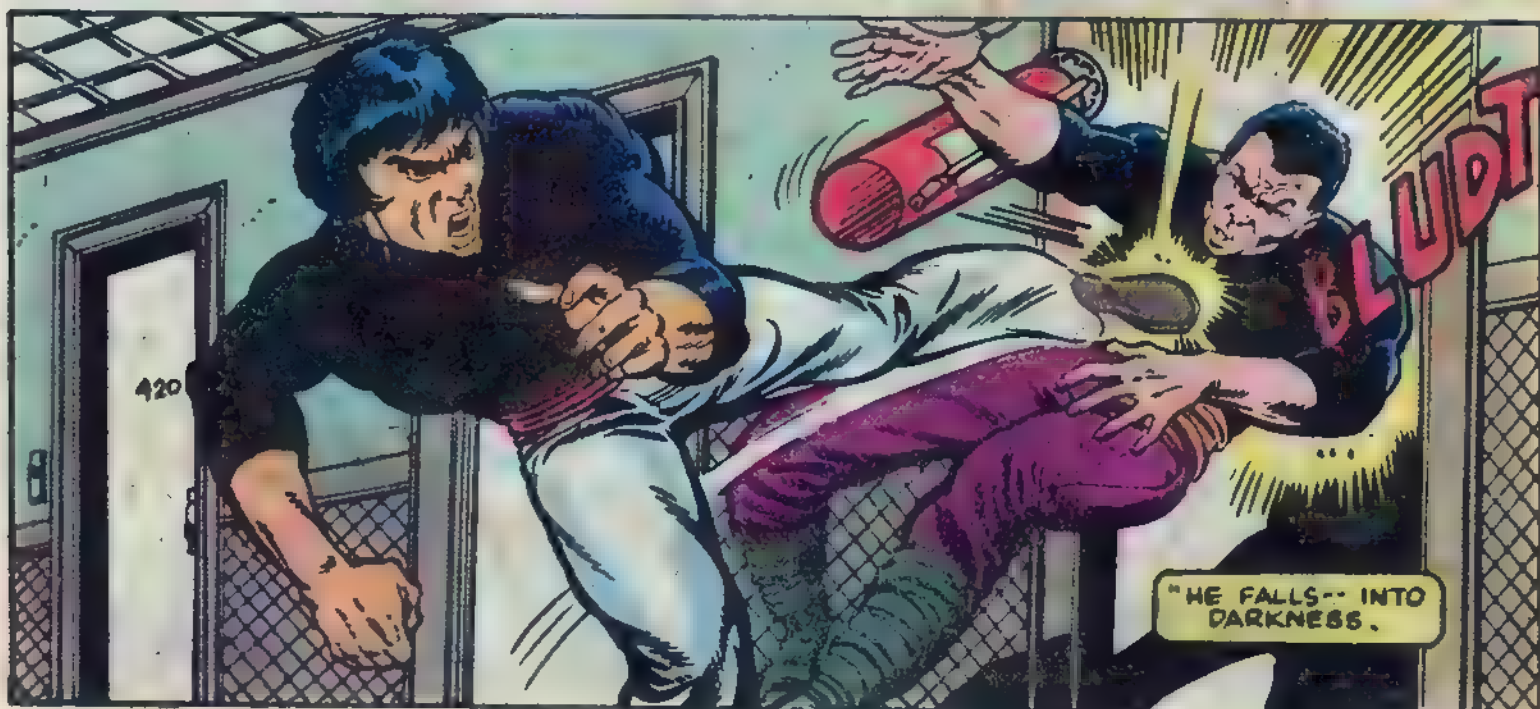
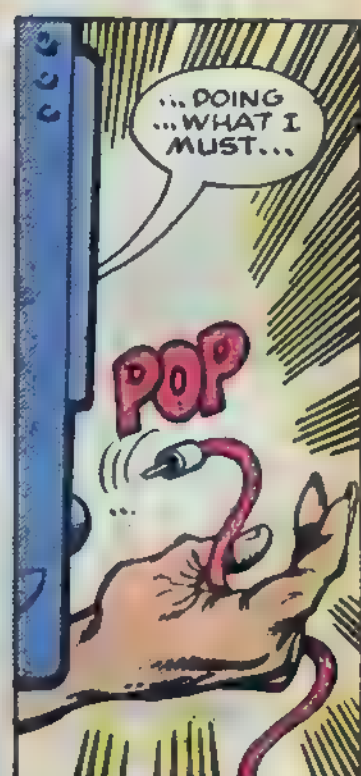
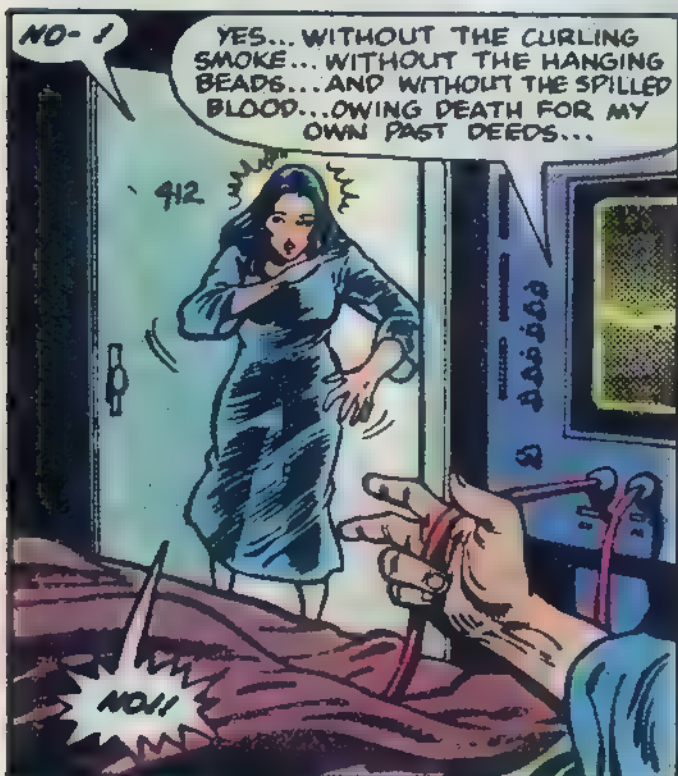
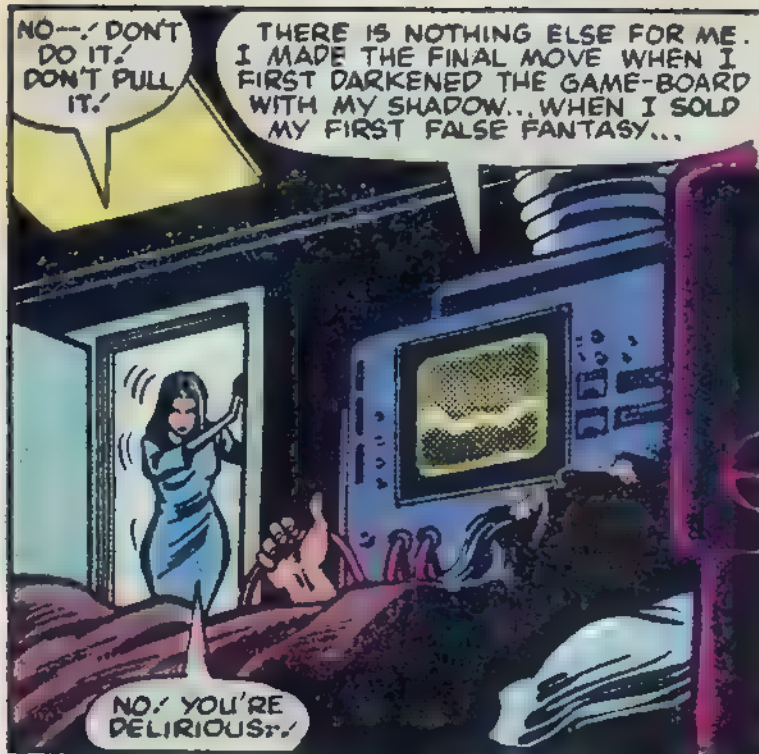
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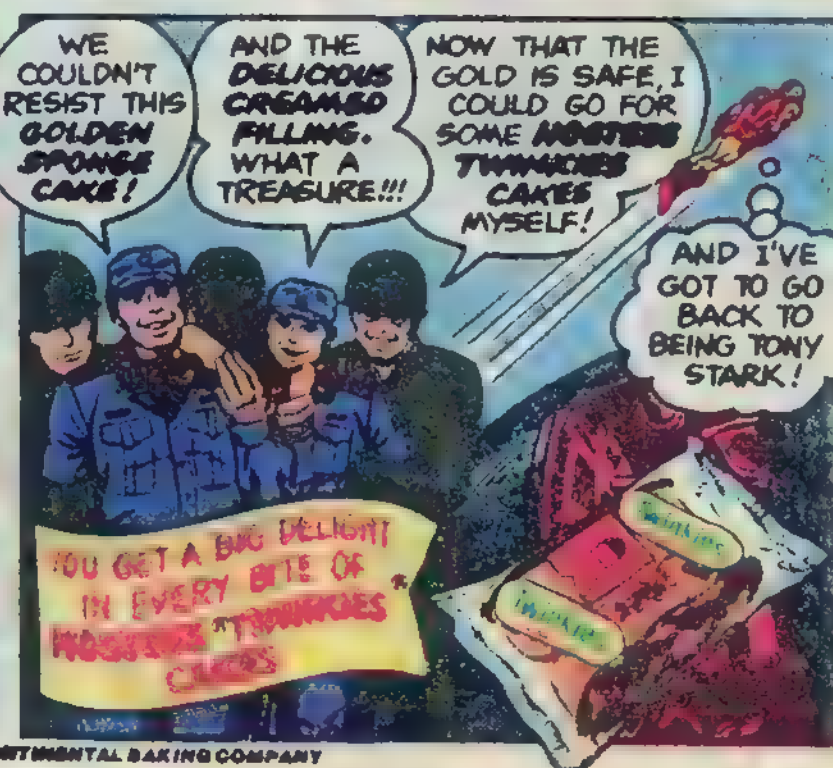
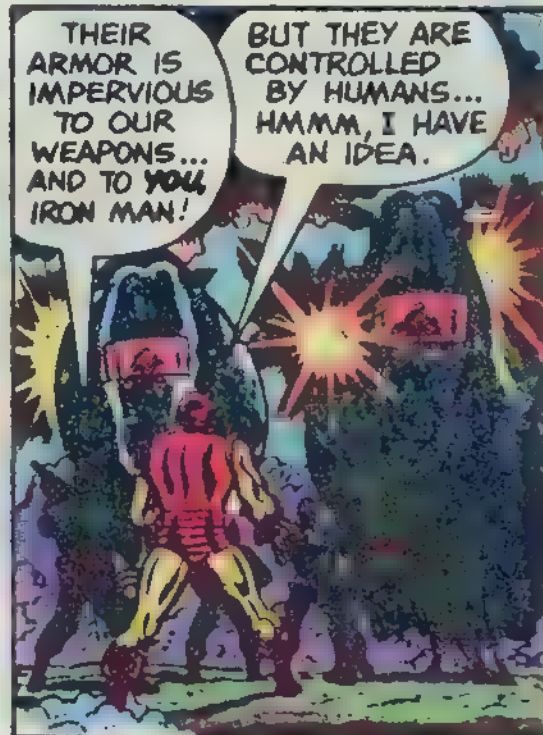
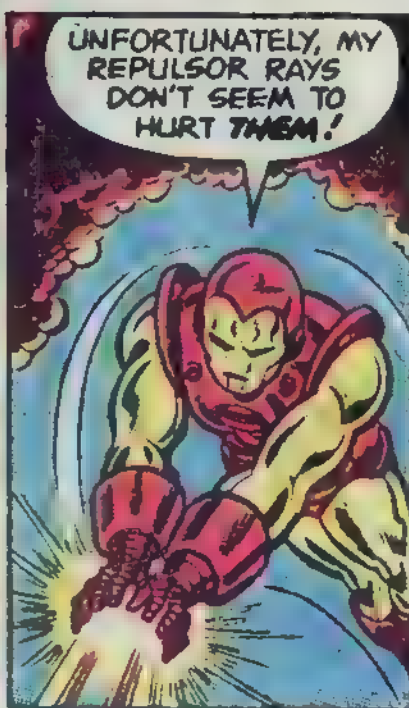
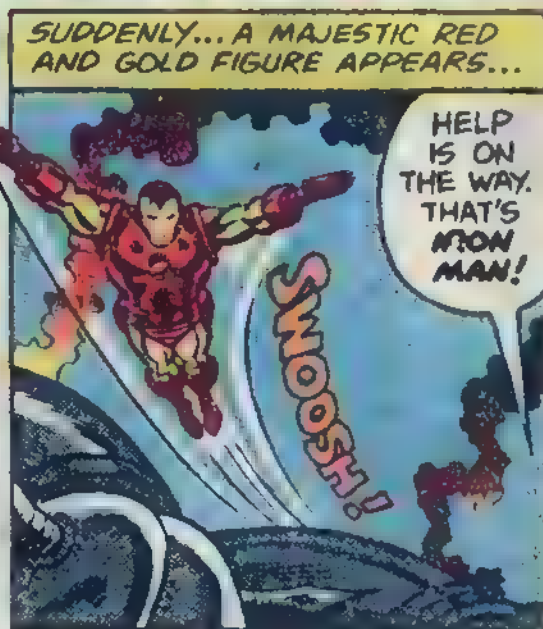
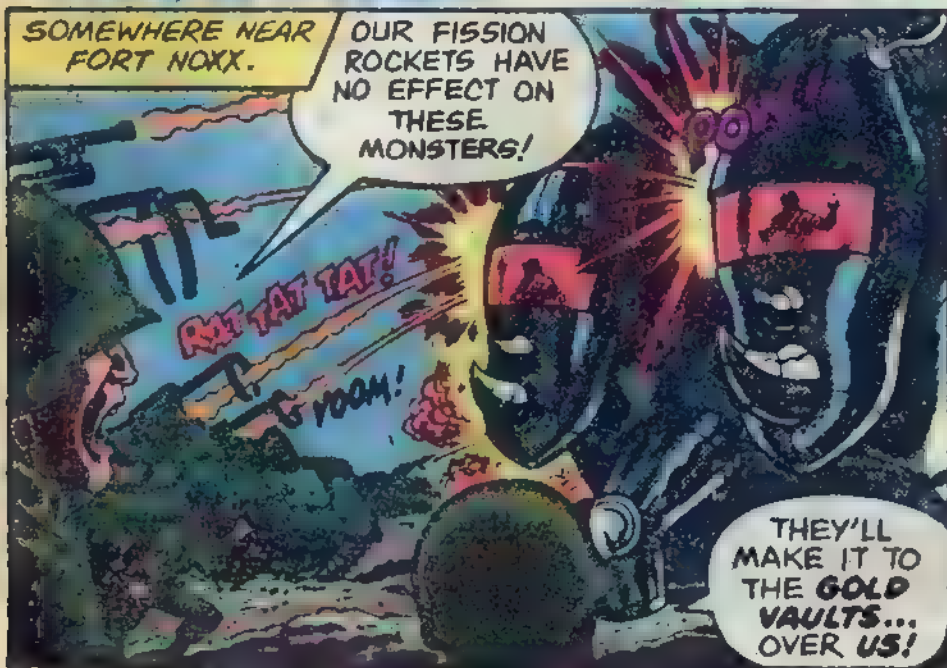


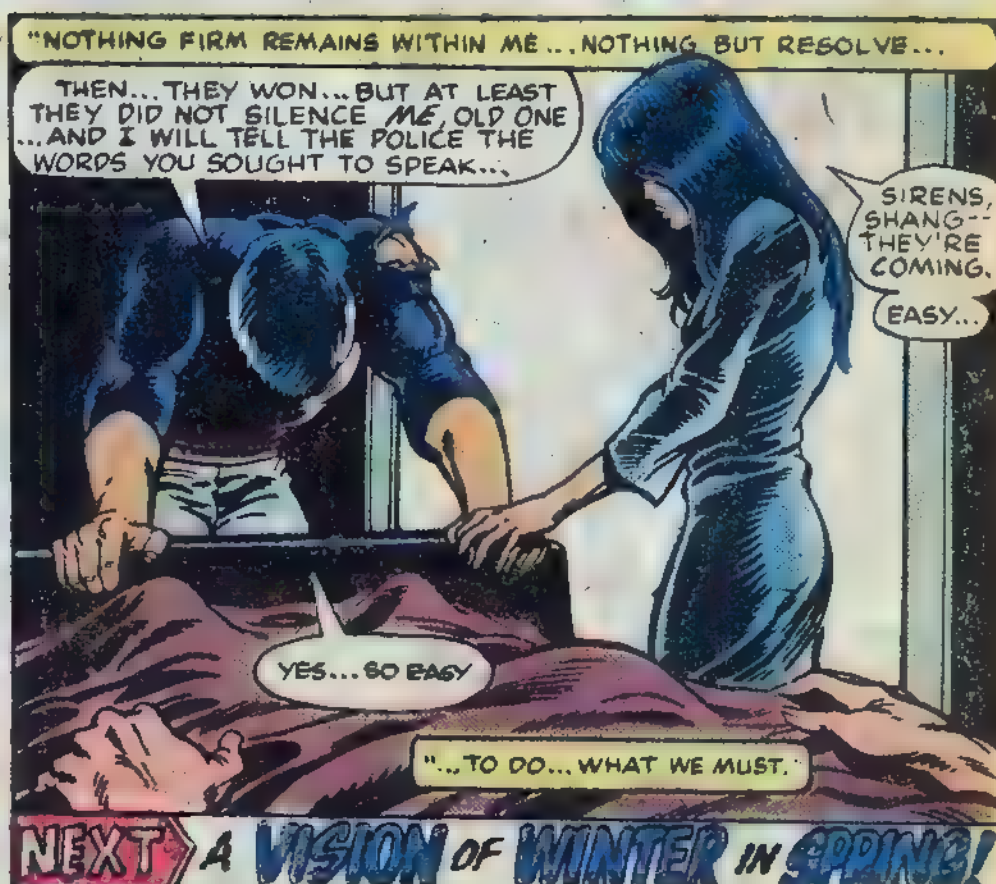
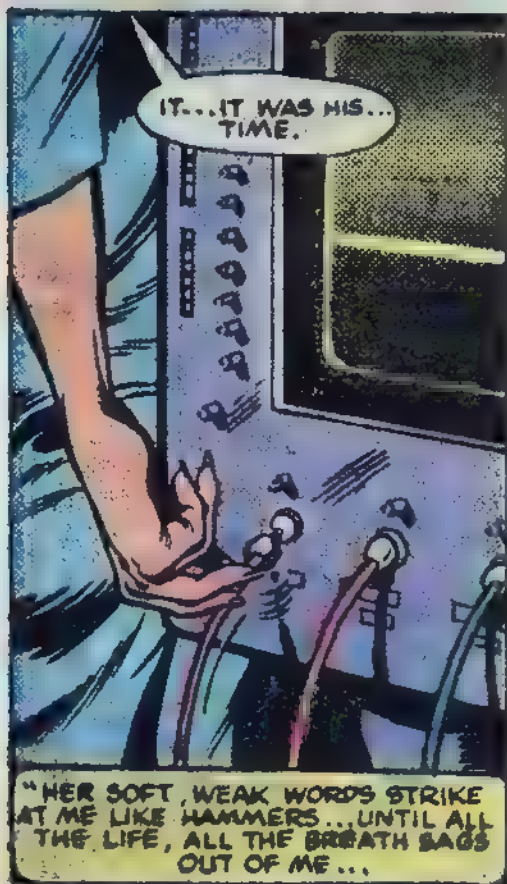




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JIM SALICRUP
EDITOR
BOB BUDIAANSKY
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Dear Doug,

MASTER OF KUNG FU #96 — "Carter's Super Midnight" — is yet another good, solid, self-contained issue.

However, I hope I don't sound cruel if I ask you to lay off the homilies for a while. I realize, from reading the letters page, that this book can often touch and elevate people, but if you read closely you'll see that they were touched not by a lecture — not by the "moral" of the story — but by a well-written line or two hitting them at a particularly receptive time in their lives. This kind of reader identification is subtle and unexpected — and welcome. Lately, however, you've written some stories that are too blatant, in that your "message" is pounded into the reader's skull in order to "help" them. This issue, for example, dealt with the handicapped, the last three with young people in cults, and before that with young people in gangs. Subtle? No. Touching? No. Sentimental? Yes! Though #96 featured an excellent story and well thought-out character relationships, there were also plenty of lectures and formal speeches. Nice for *Reader's Digest*, but not the MOKF I've been reading lately.

I should end this letter by saying how much I enjoy the book nonetheless. It's probably the most powerful, yet grossly underrated, comic on the stands today. Keep up the good work... but lay off the "message" stuff.

Glenn Dressler
RR #2 Box 191AA
Kankakee, IL 60901

Friends,

The last few issues of MASTER OF KUNG FU have left me thinking about Leiko with some disturbance. This girl, once the most interesting female in the Marvel Universe, is becoming boring.

Maybe the problem, Doug, is that your concept of her doesn't match mine. If so, I like my image better.

I'm not talking about sex roles at all, which are still handled well. Very well. It's just that it's hard to reconcile the Leiko I thought I knew with this "new" Leiko. She was once an exceptionally adept superspy — and al-

though you have skillfully played with, and undermined, that concept, it was nevertheless the source of her developing personality. The sultry sophisticated whom Shang-Chi met in the bathtub, the girl who broke Reston's heart and Mordillo's mind and then found a sort of peace with Shang-Chi... where is she?

She now echoes Shang-Chi's philosophy, but it sounds false coming from her. She may indeed approve of it, but it is foreign to her established personality. She was not brought up in a Honan, China retreat, but in busy, brutal cities. She could not have had many illusions, all the more reason for Shang-Chi's sincerity to hold appeal for her. Indeed, she was probably too clever for her own good. She believed ends justified means. She was a troubleshooter and adventuress, reckless, ruthless, restless.

This has not really changed, as recent adventures in Morocco demonstrate. She is also a good person, and always has been. But there is no reason for her to live life on Shang-Chi's terms, even if they are lovers. Even if she admires his attitudes.

In other words, Shang-Chi is a philosopher forced by fate into action for the sake of his philosophy. Leiko Wu is an activist.

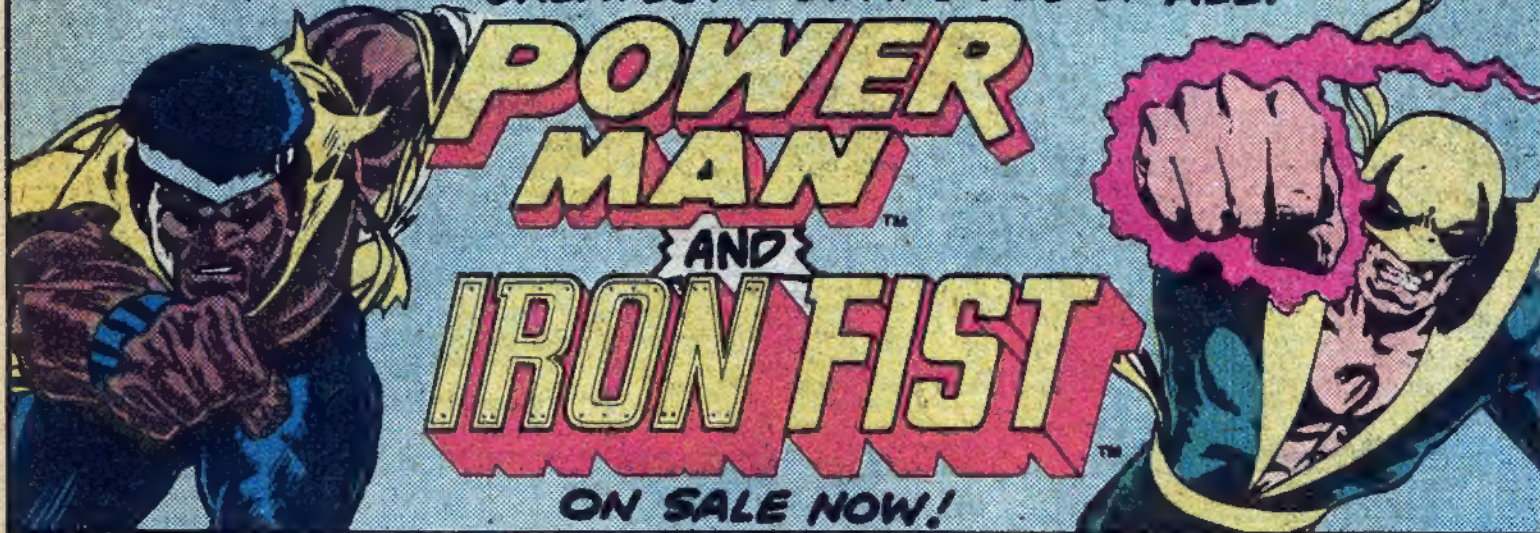
I see potential for interesting conflict here, while these two, loving and respecting one another, embrace different values... particularly with Clive Reston hovering on the edges — that being a love triangle I would not like to see permanently resolved. It's too good to be totally eliminated.

Finally, I would not like to see Leiko become a contented homemaker (though the potential is there), or a person content to go sightseeing in a city riddled with crime and violence, or even a spokesman reiterating Shang-Chi's views. She is not a person for words and rhetoric. Let her take her chances. Let her act, even when Shang-Chi would not approve. She is capable of making her own judgments.

Elizabeth Holden
211 Sunnyside Ave.
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 0R4

Points well taken, Elizabeth. Keep watching.

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